

Support for the Care of Children By Family, Friend, and Neighbor Caregivers Summary Report

July, 2005



*Knowledge Developed Through SOAR Opportunity Fund
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Support Grants ~ 2004*

Compiled and Edited by Child Care Resources

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During 2004, six community-based organizations in King County were engaged under the auspices of the SOAR Opportunity Fund (formerly Project Lift Off Opportunity Fund) in projects developed to intentionally support quality in the care of children by family, friends, and neighbors (FFN). These organizations documented several aspects of these projects for the benefit of policymakers, funders, and others that might have an interest in the development and/or replication of effective supports for quality in FFN care. This report, which was compiled and edited by Child Care Resources, is a result of that documentation.

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Family, Friend, and Neighbor Child Care (FFN)

Family, friend, and neighbor child care is defined by SOAR Opportunity Fund as care of children by non-parental relatives (i.e. grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings), friends, and other unregulated caregivers in the neighborhood or community while parents work or take care of other responsibilities.

For 21% of children ages 0–5 in Washington state, FFN is their primary care arrangement. Thirty-five percent of children 0-5 are primarily cared for in child care centers or family homes, and 44% are primarily in parental care. In King County, this means that about 28,000 children ages 0-5 are in the care of FFN as a primary care arrangement. Many families use two or more types of care for their children, so the number of children in FFN care for some amount of time each week is considerably higher.

Families more likely to have an FFN child care arrangement include those with characteristics of low-to moderate income; Latino and African American; refugees and immigrants; and those with a child with special needs. These same populations are disproportionately more likely to have negative experiences and fail to thrive in the school system.

Given the rising concern about improving outcomes for all children and reducing disparities in school success between children from different demographics, the correlation between populations that are more likely to struggle in schools and those that are more likely to have children in the care of FFN provides direction and opportunity for the community to focus resources effectively.

Yet, with all of the attention in recent years on learning opportunities from birth; secure attachment; high quality child care; and children’s social, emotional and cognitive readiness for school, FFN child care and caregivers have been largely overlooked.

Surveys and research from around the country provide evidence that family, friend and neighbor caregivers are more likely than regulated caregivers to lack current knowledge of early child development. They are less likely to have safety equipment in their homes, know what activities encourage secure attachment and brain development, and provide a variety of books and educational materials. This contributes to our community’s inability to have all children ready to succeed in school and to close achievement gaps for the most vulnerable children.

Thus, the members of SOAR Opportunity Fund recognized the need to address this gap, in order for our community to meet its goals for preparing and supporting all children for success in school and life.

SOAR Opportunity Fund

The SOAR Opportunity Fund is a collaboration of 20 private and public funders, which identified FFN child care as an important area of focus to accomplish the goal of providing every child in King County the greatest opportunity possible to succeed in school and life.

The major *goals* of SOAR Opportunity Fund in the arena of FFN are (1) to increase overall community awareness that family, friend and neighbor caregivers have an important role in contributing to the healthy development, school readiness and school success of children, and (2) to strengthen the capacity of family, friend and neighbor caregivers. SOAR Opportunity Fund is continuing development toward an eventual countywide system of resources and support; building leadership in several sectors of the community and in culturally diverse leaders on this issue; and capturing learning to make it available for dissemination.

Before the SOAR Opportunity Fund began investment in this arena, information related to best practices for engaging family, friend and neighbor caregivers and strengthening quality of this form of care was scarce. During the three years prior to 2004, a theory of change was developed to guide the funding and conduct of the work in which SOAR Opportunity Fund was investing and to set up an evaluation process for learning and assessment purposes. Several organizations received funding to begin testing direct service and system-building strategies and participate in a learning community to expand knowledge in this arena.

From the beginning, SOAR Opportunity Fund sought to develop an infrastructure that could support an effective countywide system of resources and support for the FFN caregivers. An important part of those system-building activities has been to encourage a wide range of child and family organizations to reach out to and open up their existing services to caregivers, children and parents involved in family, friend and neighbor care, as well as expanding and developing some new services specifically for this population. A variety of approaches to engage and support family, friend and neighbor caregivers from diverse cultural communities have been tested and vetted by SOAR Opportunity Fund grantees, and some promising practices have emerged from this process.

Grantee Organizations

Six organizations in King County, representing a diverse range of geographic areas and populations served, received funding from SOAR Opportunity Fund to provide and document services to support FFN in 2004 and to participate in an evaluation process conducted by Organizational Research Services. Five of these organizations were focused on direct service and leadership strategies, while the sixth (Child Care Resources) focused on coordination of the overall group and countywide systems-level strategies. These organizations participated in a monthly meeting to share learning and coordinate leadership and community awareness activities. Through this process, these organizations developed a cohesive working relationship in regard to support of FFN child care that transcends the connection that was intentionally established through their funding agreements with SOAR Opportunity Fund. These organizations are:

Child Care Resources

Child Care Resources is a countywide child care resource and referral agency which provides support and resources to families and child care providers to promote quality care of children. In conjunction with the SOAR Opportunity Fund, CCR provides a leadership, coordination and liaison role in regard to the above agencies, other individuals and organizations in Seattle/King County engaged in family, friend and neighbor work, and the Sparking Connections national initiative. Child Care Resources' role has been largely one of system building and advancing the awareness and understanding of FFN in the community at-large.

Strategies implemented by Child Care Resources in 2004 included:

- ❖ Facilitating the FFN Roundtable which provides a forum for the agencies and organizations in our community with a vested interest in FFN child care to address issues, provide guidance, and network to strengthen support for FFN in King County
- ❖ Conducting a survey of Roundtable members to determine which strategies for supporting FFN had the greatest support in the community and what tools and resources were most greatly needed by these organizations to do this work.
- ❖ Development of *Ready, Set, Go Bags*, which consisted of a collection of materials for use by FFN caregivers to strengthen the quality of care they provide, for distribution by community-based agencies and organizations
- ❖ Revising "*Taking Care of our Children*" booklets with information that benefits Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers in King County
- ❖ Development of an FFN Electronic Bulletin Board to provide a forum for Family, Friend, and Neighbor child care providers, as well as other stakeholders

Cascade People's Center

This highly active, community-run family support center in the heart of Seattle serves more than 6000 people a year. Staff and volunteers built on existing programs and existing relationships with families to enhance FFN caregiver skills and support, and to raise community awareness of FFN caregiving. In addition to adding an FFN focus as an "overlay" on the Center's current work, the Cascade People's Center piloted new projects in 2004 in support of FFN, including:

- ❖ Whimsy, providing school readiness activities in local parks;
- ❖ Family Resource Fair, bringing together services and resources in a comfortable setting for families;
- ❖ Youth Caregiver Workshops, to increase skills of sibling caregivers under the age of 18.

Center for Human Services-Shoreline Family Support Center

The Family, Friend, and Neighbor program located at the Shoreline Family Support Center has incorporated two distinct strategies into one program. In 2004, staff members provided two-hour classes, two times a week to pre-school age children and their caregivers. One day each week children were involved in school readiness activities in the children's room, while caregivers meet separately to learn about ways of providing quality child care that will improve the children's ability to succeed in school. This facilitated group for caregivers provided support, education, and resources on a wide range of topics identified by the caregivers themselves. On the second day of program each week, caregivers and children met together in the children's classroom, to engage in school readiness activities. On this day caregivers were encouraged to be the teachers, and staff members seek to provide role-modeling and support only. This

allowed caregivers to realize their own ability and important role in lives of the children in their care.

Children's Services of Sno-Valley

Children's Services of Sno-Valley is a family support center serving five widespread communities comprising the Snoqualmie Valley, east of Seattle in the Cascade foothills. The Snoqualmie Valley, a primarily rural community including Latino, Hmong, and Native American populations, is undergoing a period of rapid growth and change. In this third year of intentional work in supporting FFN, CSSV continued activities to increase community awareness of the importance of healthy childhood development, the connection between early childhood experience and school readiness, and the role played by Family, Friend & Neighbor caregivers, while continuing to support and establish relationships with individuals caregivers.

Services provided to FFN caregivers in 2004:

- ❖ Bi-monthly caregiver meetings at CSSV
- ❖ Summer meetings in cooperation with community indoor playground
- ❖ Facilitated on-line listserve
- ❖ Caregiver and parent education lending library
- ❖ Mini-grant program
- ❖ Support of parent-run child care cooperative
- ❖ Grandparent support group

Community awareness activities:

- ❖ One-on-one neighborhood conversations and surveys
- ❖ Asset based community development
- ❖ Partnering with individuals, associations, agencies, and institutions to establish a healthy child/school success initiative
- ❖ Facilitation of school readiness project in one of our two school districts
- ❖ Parent education classes on choosing child care

Chinese Information and Service Center

Chinese Information and Service Center is a multi-service agency that provides culturally and linguistically appropriate services to the Chinese immigrant community in Seattle/King County. Each year, CISC helps over 4,000 limited English proficient individuals and families access vital information and resources.

In response to the needs of Family Friend and Neighbor caregivers, CISC provided caregivers and parents with caregiver training, play group sessions, age appropriate child development activity toolkits, and much more. Working to maximize the bilingual and bicultural development of children, CISC aimed to increase their academic, social, emotional, and physical success.

In 2004, CISC provided:

- ❖ Weekly play group sessions
- ❖ One series of caregiver workshops
- ❖ One series of family literacy workshops

Refugee Women's Alliance

REWA provides a host of services for refugee families from East Africa, Vietnam, Cambodia, and other countries. Most of the work is done on a one-to-one basis with clients in a culturally relevant and compatible manner. Caseworkers assist women in connecting with services they need in the community. Many of the clients of REWA are either providing care for the children of others and/or use FFN care for their own children.

In 2004, REWA offered 6-session series of workshops for parents and caregivers that provided a range of useful information relevant across the domains of child development. From these workshops, REWA has identified and cultivated leaders in the community to provide outreach and mentorship for future endeavors to support parents and caregivers in the communities they serve.

Sparking Connections

In addition to providing leadership on the county level, the SOAR Opportunity Fund grantees have participated in *Sparking Connections*, a national consortium initiated by the Family and Work Institute to coordinate efforts related to strengthening the quality of care and resources for children in the care of family, friends, and neighbors. The consortium consists of 5 “pilot sites” (which are part of a national evaluation being conducted by a team from Cornell University) and 4 “learning community partners”. All of these sites have participated in a variety of learning and technical assistance activities, including conference calls, individualized consultation, national technical assistance meetings and brokering linkages with retailers and other national experts, funders and organizations. The Kirlin Foundation has sponsored the participation of the SOAR Opportunity Fund grantees in this national effort, which has provided much additional insight and opportunity for King County.

Child Care Resources Family, Friend, and Neighbor Project, 2004

Connection to Family, Friend and Neighbor Child Care

Child Care Resources' vision is to lead community efforts to ensure that every family can find safe, quality, affordable child care. The leaders in this agency recognized that in order to be responsive to all families and communities, the agency's work would need to include family, friend and neighbor care, since a significant percentage of children are in this form of care and it has been identified as the preferred form of non-parental care by many of our communities.

Child Care Resources has been a leader nationwide among resource and referral agencies in its willingness to explore possibilities for including support to FFN child care in its core services. This is an arena that has traditionally been eschewed by resource and referral, due to its diffuse nature and the anticipated difficulty in identifying and engaging with non-regulated caregivers.

Determining an Appropriate Role

CCR provides a leadership, coordination and liaison role in regard to the other five agencies involved in FFN work and the national Sparking Connections initiative. Child Care Resources is unique in its qualifications to fill that role. CCR has taken a leadership role in FFN outreach at the local, regional and nation levels, including building relationships with relevant contacts and involvement in multiple initiatives that can be leveraged to benefit this team. Further, with 15 years of experience partnering with caregivers, CCR has the internal resources and expertise to continue developing materials, fluidly respond to changing needs and trends, provide technical assistance across a diverse range of topics and offer training related to the care of children in all settings. In addition, Child Care Resources has a strong history of leading and organizing collaborative community efforts. Child Care Resources is a recognized and trusted mentor for caregivers and agency partners alike.

As the coordinating agency, CCR has convened monthly meetings at which all six FFN-serving organizations practice true collaboration by sharing successes, materials, ideas for addressing challenges, and opportunities for raising additional funds, as well as accountability for meeting their obligations. CCR also took a leadership role in helping to organize the national Sparking Connections FFN conference, which was held in Seattle in October 2004. During the conference, the agencies doing FFN work in King County were recognized as national leaders in this arena. Staff from those agencies also had the opportunity to meet and network with other national FFN leaders.

Outreach to and Engaging with Community-Based Organizations

In the years prior to the period which this report covers, CCR began a community process of outreach to community-based organizations and agencies that work with populations that are statistically more likely to have FFN child care arrangements as a primary form of care for their children. Through this process, CCR recognized a potential role in the community that fit well with its existing structure and capacity.

Rather than trying to engage directly with the individuals who are providing care for the children, as the agency does to serve the needs of licensed child care providers, it was clear from our prior work in the FFN arena that the most effective and far-reaching approach for CCR to take in support of FFN child care was to build and support the capacity of community-based organizations that already have relationships and/or missions that connect them with the families and caregivers.



In considering the types of agencies and organizations that fit this criteria, CCR easily identified hundreds of potential partners to engage in this work. Contact information was gleaned from requests to various listserves and from sign-in sheets at community presentations regarding this work. Largely through initiating electronic communication to individuals, CCR convened a group of over 80 stakeholders in the support of FFN child care in King County. Over half of these are organizations that have direct contact with people providing care for family, friends, and neighbors. This group is now known as the FFN Roundtable.

Use of Cultural Knowledge and Relationships

CCR has been intentional in engaging organizations that serve a wide range of diverse populations. Several organizations serve specific cultural and/or ethnic populations. There are organizations that serve primarily urban, suburban, and rural communities represented. Many of these organizations engage in direct service and community empowerment activities, and they are aware and responsive to the needs and dynamics of the communities they serve.

CCR has mindfully developed multiple options for these organizations to be involved in the process of shaping what services are provided for FFN caregivers and by what means. CCR has been responsive to the direction provided by the community, changing direction when necessary to meet the needs as expressed by the representatives from the community with whom the agency has cultivated trust and regular contact.

As an example, one of the tools that CCR developed in response to an expressed need by the community was the “*Ready, Set, Go!*” Bag. Community organizations and agencies reported that having a tangible, attractive collection of items and information to provide to FFN caregivers would significantly strengthen both community awareness and caregiver capacity in regard to FFN child care. CCR conducted a community process to determine what items to include in this collection, as well as the design of the container and the process for distribution.

Initially, CCR had planned to develop consensus among the Roundtable members as to what items would be included, and then assemble and deliver the bags. When it became clear that there was not going to be consensus and that the possibility of creating versions of the bag to meet the wide array of specificities for various languages, cultures, ages, and developmental stages was going to be expensive and cumbersome, CCR developed a solution that was embraced by the community. All of the possible content items for the bags were secured and CCR had two “*Ready, Set, Go Bag*” assembly days. All of the Roundtable organizations and agencies were invited to assemble contents that would specifically meet the needs of their

clients. A total of 26 representatives from 19 community-based organizations received 30-80 sets of bags each to distribute to the populations they serve.

In addition to agencies that used the bags, CCR developed new relationships with organizations and agencies that contributed items for the bags. These relationships provided an opportunity to build awareness and additional community capacity to support FFN child care.

Key Points of Learning

Throughout 2004, CCR has been engaged with the community in discussion and awareness-building efforts regarding the care of children by family, friends, and neighbors. Several key points have emerged from our activities that provide direction for our future work in this arena.

Public Awareness and Perceptions of Family, Friend, and Neighbor Child Care

While public policy and initiatives to strengthen care of children in our community have largely failed to recognize and make accommodations for FFN caregivers, the public-at-large generally considers some form of FFN child care to be the most preferable and “natural” form of non-parental child care.

Terminology

The term “family, friend, and neighbor” (or FFN) is not typically recognized or associated with the care of children. Even individuals within organizations and agencies that have participated in discussions and efforts to support and strengthen quality in this form of care often do not recognize the term until it is explained, using examples. And there is a great deal of confusion regarding what is and is not included in the definition of care. This might be related to a correlating lack of public awareness regarding licensing issues.

Licensed/Regulated Distinction

One factor that has been used to distinguish family, friend, and neighbor care has been the characteristic of being unlicensed/unregulated. While this distinction is a significant one to individuals working in particular segments of government and the professional childcare community, there is not the same level of recognition or value placed on licensing of child care by the community at large. A significant portion of the community is unaware that there are laws regarding licensing of child care providers who care for children in their homes. And those who are aware of this fact, generally do not consider it to be a primary distinction between “types of care,” but instead as a bureaucratic matter or legality.

Distinct Groups within FFN

The practical (rather than legal) nature of the relationship between the child and caregiver seems to be the aspect of child care that is most distinctive to the general public. In practice, there are at least two very distinct groups of caregivers within the existing FFN child care category- those whose relationship with the family and child precedes and prevails over the child care arrangement and those for whom the child care arrangement is the primary aspect of the relationship. In the public eye, a nanny or neighbor who is paid to care for children in their home is more similar to a licensed family child care home provider than they are to other FFN

caregivers who are caring for children with little or no compensation, because they have a cultural or spiritual investment in the care of the child.

Overlap with Kinship Care

Similarly, the difference between a kinship caregiver, which is considered within the human services field to be a grandparent or other relative who has either legal or de facto custody of a child, and a grandparent or relative who is providing what is considered to be FFN care, is not widely recognized in the community. There is a great deal of overlap between these two groups, and in fact, many individuals move between these two definitions, due to changing circumstances within their families. There are also a number of situations in which the line between these definitions is almost completely blurred- such as cases in which a child's legal parent lives with the child in a household with other relatives and the parent of the child is not considered by the family to be primarily responsible for the care of the child. In this case, other relatives might be acting both as kinship caregivers- making sure that the child is fed, clothed, receiving healthcare, enrolled for school, etc.- and as FFN caregivers, caring for the child while the parent and other household members work or take care of other responsibilities.

Resources Overlap

While kinship caregivers can often benefit from support and resources that go beyond the scope of what is needed by many FFN caregivers, they can generally benefit from all of the support and resources that are useful for FFN caregivers.

Additionally, most of the support and resources that have traditionally been considered as "parenting" supports are also beneficial to individuals providing either FFN or kinship care. One of the strategies to support FFN child care that has been promoted with some success in the community has been working with community-based organizations that provide resources and services for "parents" to expand their outreach and intentionally include FFN caregivers in the promotion and offering of these services.

Motivations to Receive Resources

In most FFN child care arrangements, the individual who is providing care is doing so without compensation and without any market pressure to motivate them to strengthen their skills and knowledge in regard to the care of children. In some cases, families receive a subsidy payment from the state to provide a minimum level of compensation for the FFN child care, but the amount is so minimal, that it cannot alone serve as a primary motivating factor for the caregivers.

The typical motivations for caring for the children in these situations are commitment or obligation to family or friends, love of the children, and/or a sense of civic or spiritual obligation.

While a majority of FFN caregivers are open to and interested in receiving resources on topics related to caring for children, they do not believe that they **need** these resources. Most people who are providing care for children believe they are capable and competent to do this work. They do not perceive that their skills and knowledge are in need of improvement. Thus, resources provided to these caregivers for the purpose of maximizing their capacity to provide quality care for children will be more successful if the resources and provision methods are aligned with these perceptions and motivations for providing the care.

We learned that it is often more effective to engage FFN caregivers by focusing on what the child will gain, especially in regard for being ready for school. The term “play group,” and calling out that the children will have fun there, has been more enticing than a “support group” for caregivers in which they are invited to “come learn about child development and school readiness.”

Family Support Overlay

Given this set of circumstances, application of generally accepted family support principles (Appendix 1) and strategies is most appropriate in the support of FFN child care arrangements that are made among family and friends.

The most effective strategies for strengthening capacity among this group are those that are flexible and responsive to existing circumstances and emerging issues and concerns, require a low level of initial commitment from the participants, are easily accessible, and are culturally appropriate to the group being served. Likewise, the most effective methods of engagement with this group of FFN caregivers are organic in nature, and focus more on the experience of the child/ren than on the skills of the caregivers. Recruitment by word of mouth, through natural connectors where people “pay, pray, and play” get the best results.

Challenges with Family Support Overlay

The challenges involved in utilizing these types of support strategies are primarily around the nexus with the more formalized systems of funding and academia. The family support strategies that are generally more successful in regard to attracting and retaining participants from the most vulnerable communities, and that we have anecdotal evidence of being the most successful in regard to building skills and knowledge related to quality care of children in the community, are generally not as conducive to low-cost methods of gathering clear data for measurement of impact. This creates a difficulty for those individuals who are accountable for the expenditure of private or public funds for the purpose of improving outcomes for children to effectively justify the expenditure on these strategies that do not have a sufficient amount of quantifiable data to prove the level of effectiveness that those individuals working in the field have observed.

Another challenge in applying family support strategies to the strengthening of FFN child care is the public perception that family support resources are for the purpose of remedying a problem. Many individuals are wary to participate in any type of activity that could be perceived as a form of charity for them or that assumes a deficit on their part. As discussed above, most FFN child caregivers do not perceive that they are “in need” of any services, so they are not inclined to participate in activities that are conducted under the auspices and/or within facilities operated by family support agencies that also provide crisis services or are associated with “charity.”

Professional Child Care Overlay

As discussed above, the overlap between the professional child care field and individuals who are included in the FFN definition is not as intensive as the overlap with family support, but it is not inconsequential. FFN care is particularly desirable for families in rural communities where there are fewer options for accessible, affordable licensed care; for families with 3 or more children; and for families who have been disconnected in some way from their network of family

and friends- a move for work, for example, or often cases of domestic violence or political asylum cause this situation. In these cases, seeking in-home care from a professional nanny or from a license-exempt person in their neighborhood is a likely option.

Market Incentives

FFN caregivers who are compensated and consider child care their primary work are generally more open to formal training opportunities, which can increase their “market value.” This is particularly true for nannies and neighborhood caregivers that serve primarily upper-income families, who can afford to pay a higher amount in order to employ a caregiver with a higher level of training. In these situations, the caregivers and/or the employer often seek out professional training options such as classes through the local community college, Red Cross, nanny agency, and/or resource and referral.

Market Failure

However, there is a distinction between those caregivers who are more highly compensated and consider themselves child care professionals, and those who are paid less and more inclined to consider it the only form of work they can get. Nannies and/or neighborhood caregivers that are caring for children from lower-income families and families that have less information regarding the importance and characteristics of quality child care have less market incentive to increase their training and knowledge regarding the care of children. The resources necessary to strengthen the quality of care provided by this set of caregivers, as well as the methods of engagement and delivery, are not as likely to be available through an existing source of professional training.

Subsidy System

In some cases, families use the subsidy provided by the state as all or part of the compensation provided to the caregiver in these arrangements. This is also a possible point for engagement of the family and caregiver.

Encouraging Move to Licensed System

There have been a number of efforts to recruit FFN caregivers into the licensed system, which has been determined to be a largely inappropriate strategy for most FFN caregivers. This strategy is primarily relevant to those caregivers who are providing compensated child care and are from communities where there are significant barriers to the licensing process, such as language, culture, and/or educational level. To have the greatest likelihood of success, any program using this strategy needs to be designed specifically to overcome the barriers of the particular community. A good example of a program that uses this strategy is the Child Care Resources *Careers* program.

Resistance in Community to Providing Support for FFN

Community resistance to the provision of resources and services to support FFN child care has generally been related to the overall concept of providing such support, rather than resistance to specific strategies. This resistance is almost entirely based on a perceived need to compete for limited resources. The two groups that have generally been most inclined to resist, rather than support, community resources being used in support of FFN child care are licensed child care

providers and families in which there is a “stay-at-home” parent or parents who work alternating schedules to care for children.

Licensed child care providers have incurred expenditures of time and money to get licensed, and they have typically received some training regarding aspects of child development and child care. While there are resources available for these child care providers, there are also many gaps between what they can get and what they could use in order to provide an optimal quality of care for the families they serve. This creates a great deal of sensitivity regarding the use of resources for child care outside of the licensed system. Additionally, these providers have concerns about FFN caregivers “competing” for children, when they need to keep a full roster in order to maintain financial viability. And many are also concerned about the well-being of children in unregulated environments. Many of these concerns are based on the misperception that the term “family, friend, and neighbor care” refers to unlicensed programs that are operating illegally.

Two-parent families that perceive that they have made a significant sacrifice to avoid having their children in the care of anyone but parents are also more inclined to be resistant to public resources being expended to provide support for any form of non-parental child care. There is a perception that this is taking resources from their family, through taxes, in order to support the lifestyles of others who are not making the same sacrifices.

Recommendations for Further Resources for FFN Caregiving in Seattle/King County

Based on the learning that is recounted above, CCR recommends the following for consideration of stakeholders in King County who are interested in strengthening the quality of FFN child care:

- a. Continue involvement in efforts such as Sparking Connections to develop common language, methods, and partnerships and to learn from what is being done in other regions of the country.
- b. Continue public awareness efforts to highlight benefits to larger community of strengthening FFN child care- i.e. improved school readiness/success of children, employment stability, family self-sufficiency.
- c. Focus most resources toward efforts within the family support realm.
- d. Include parents and kinship caregivers in service-delivery strategies for support to FFN child care.
- e. Meet FFN caregivers where they are in the community - in their preferred languages, in comfortable settings, where they pay, pray, and play.
- f. Ensure intentional/informed representation for FFN on local, regional, and national level-meetings, initiatives

**Cascade People's Center
Opportunity Fund/Family, Friend, and Neighbor Project
Year-End Report 2004**

Our Story: All Benefit When All Are Welcome

Cascade People's Center now has five active weekly Play & Learn groups in Seattle. The program consists of socializing, peer support, caregiver skill building, child development, early literacy, and school readiness. What makes Play & Learn so effective in each of these areas is the casual and friendly atmosphere in which it is created. A key part in supporting Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers is providing opportunities like the Play & Learn groups for caregivers to gather in ways that are safe, comfortable, enriching, and authentic. The innate power of this simple practice was illustrated in a recent Play & Learn group.

A caregiver brought her child and the child of her friend to the program. Both children have dwarfism. As research has shown, FFN caregivers tend to be isolated from their communities. Caregivers of differently-abled children experience additional barriers to social connections. They also may experience the stigmas, stereotypes, and prejudices that dominant members of our society attribute to "difference". Although there were no other differently-abled children that morning, the parent/caregiver felt welcomed, safe, and comfortable. The communication of this openness and validation is closely connected to the other participants and staff of the program. Rather than finding a group of white middle class women (with whom dominant society associates with good and competent caregiving), this parent/caregiver was greeted by additional parents and caregivers who, for different reasons, had experienced societal invalidation of their caregiving abilities, primarily as men and people of color.

Even though only one staff member had previous experiences with children with dwarfism, all of the staff and participants had previous life experiences with feeling unwanted, unwelcome, and out of place. Feeling welcome is the gateway to all of our objectives in this work. Peer support, improved school readiness, increased knowledge of child development, none of these will be accessible without initial caregiver investment. This investment is especially crucial

among communities and identities that historically have been disenfranchised from resources, support, and most importantly the nomenclature of "caregiver".



This caregiver and her children were not the only people to benefit from attending the Play & Learn group. Every human being, and especially every child, gains incalculably from frequent interaction with those whose experiences, characteristics, and identities differ from our own. These interactions are all the more potent when they occur in a casual, genuine, and humane setting.

Promising Practice

Most of the promising practices learned this year were lessons learned by other grantees in the early stages of their work in supporting FFN caregivers and children. That we too shared these experiences serves as a further endorsement of their status as a promising practice. Our lessons include:

- Building on the authentic relationships with caregivers continues to be the best strategy in program outreach;

- Locating programs in housing complexes and other natural gathering places aids in the accessibility of resources and support by caregivers and children; and
- Keeping programs and activities open to all caregivers (including parents) helps promote this work as accessible and natural, rather than compartmentalized or even stigmatized.

Comparisons to Similar Sparking Connections Initiatives

The most successful programming to emerge from our Family, Friend, and Neighbor project this year was rooted in the programmatic successes of Hawaii's FFN project. Whimsy School Readiness project was inspired by and modeled after Hawaii's popular park-based activities. Similarly, our Play & Learn groups aimed to replicate those offered as a part of the Hawaii project. Our 2005 plans extend the replications of this work even further in that:

- Play & Learn groups will include activities illustrated in the Play & Learn Handbook created by Hawaii's FFN project;
- Play & Learn groups will be open to all caregivers, including parents; and
- The number of Play & Learn groups will increase as participants receive training and take over group facilitation.

Family, Friend, and Neighbor Work and Learning

We became interested in family, friend and neighbor care for two reasons. First because supporting caregivers fits so naturally into our mission of "empowering people to grow strong, sustainable families and communities". Second, the abundant need and dearth of resources made support of FFN caregivers and awareness of FFN caregiving a priority in our work of responding to the needs and concerns of families.

Initially we decided to "overlay" our FFN work onto our existing work. For example, we would build on our annual connections to over 6,000 people and 170 partners to raise awareness of FFN caregiving and promote strategies to support children. Another aspect of this approach was the incorporation of FFN caregiving skill building into existing programming with caregivers, especially sibling caregivers. Although this approach met with moderate success, when we learned about Hawaii's work through a Sparking Connections phone call, we were excited and intrigued by the idea of trying something new which required the unique structure and capabilities we possessed as a large and active Family Center. Our new approach was to locate programming in housing complexes and other natural gathering places.

In implementing a new approach, we faced the challenge of recruiting participants from scratch. In some cases we were able to build on existing relationships and recruiting participants was easier. In other attempts participation grew slowly as we took the time to build rapport in the community.

Incorporating Research and Knowledge

Our Plan & Learn groups are closely modeled after the success of the *Good Beginnings Alliance* project in Hawaii. The diversity and knowledge base of our staff has aided all of this work tremendously. Reflecting the identities and experiences of families helps build trust and credibility. This is illustrated particularly well in challenges faced by our male staff. Despite copious research to the contrary, many of us still hold the stereotype that men are inherently inadequate caregivers. Culturally, when the role of caregiving is almost exclusively delegated to one gender, this bias is fortified by tradition and custom. This bias is what greeted our two male co-workers, both of whom staff Play & Learn groups. In staff meetings, we discussed this issue.

On the one hand, it is our responsibility to honor the cultures of families with whom we work. On the other hand, it is our responsibility to implement the fourth principle of Family Support: Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial, and linguistic abilities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society. To us this meant not enabling bias but using our agency to support families in moving beyond bias. After much deliberation, we were able to develop a strategy that meant both parts of the fourth principle. Both male staff were teamed with female staff who, because of their age, gender, experience, and identities as mother and grandmother, held more immediate credibility with caregivers. The team staff will work in tandem until this same level of credibility is attributed to the male staff. At that point the female staff will move on to start a new group. In conjunction with this we are creating a "staff bio sheet" which will be available at all Play & Learn groups. This sheet will have pictures of staff and elaborate on their training experience and qualifications.

Participant Engagement

Much of the Center's 2004 programming consisted of one-time classes or events. In ongoing programs offered earlier in the year, participants were already significantly engaged in the Center. As new ongoing activities were implemented in the second half of the year, namely Whimsy and Play & Learn groups, engagement of new participants proved challenging. It is only now, as we near the end of the year, when we are seeing real signs of increased engagement.

Efforts to deepen this engagement include:

- Warm hospitality (food, friendly and casual atmosphere);
- Respect for personal boundaries (staff matching the level of participant engagement), building relationships in ways which are slow and authentic;
- Providing incentives (book giveaways, food, socialization); and
- Providing ample opportunities for participants to be involved in design and implementation of the program (topic choices, times, locations, food). For example, participants are encouraged to invest in the group by planning an activity or picking up food.

There is one story in particular that depicts the intricacies and delicate nature of engaging participants: We had sought out creative, new and old-fashioned ways to connect with caregivers and raise the awareness of FFN caregiving as prevalent and unique. This work is deeply connected to the existing relational framework of our communities. In late September, we began offering a Play & Learn group for caregivers and children at Garfield Community Center. This was a new and tentative partnership after a number of false starts with other collaborative efforts. The Community Center was also under new management after a series of challenges related to safety and public perception. Our plan was to build on the popular "Tot Time" offered twice weekly and frequented by many caregivers in the neighborhood.

Despite significant and strategic outreach, the Plan & Learn group at Garfield had no attendance for the first six sessions. The longer this continued, the more staff time, energy, and creativity was directed towards outreach in the Central Area. It is just now in early December that we are beginning to see the results of over three months of intensive work.

During these efforts, in late November, we implemented another Play & Learn group in North Seattle at Aki Kurose Village Apartments, a project of the Low Income Housing Institute.

The initial “Meet & Greet” was attended by three caregivers and five children under the age of five. Among the caregivers was a woman who provides daily childcare for her grandchild and neighbors’ children. The outreach and planning efforts which went into the Aki Kurose Village Play & Learn paled in comparison to the outreach for the Garfield group. Still, there were almost as many in attendance at the first Aki Kurose group as there were in all of the September and October groups at Garfield.

What made the difference? Relationships! Cascade People’s Center has provided free youth programming at Aki Kurose Village Apartments for over a year. We had previously been unable to reach an agreement with Seattle Parks regarding programming at Garfield Community Center. Through participation in youth and other Center programming, residents of Aki Kurose Village Apartments got to know the Center’s staff and volunteers in ways that were natural and genuine. Although staff had connected with hundreds of Central Area stakeholders (via the Family Resource Fair, Whimsy School Readiness project and outreach efforts), not enough time had passed for these connections to progress to a deeper level.

Of the connections made with Aki Kurose Village residents, none was more genuine than that made by our co-worker, Claudette, a grandmother (and FFN caregiver) who has lived at Aki Kurose for the past six years. Building on our strongest relationship, Claudette, who up until this point had been peripherally involved in the Center’s FFN project, acquired the apartment numbers where children under the age of five resided. That afternoon and evening, Claudette knocked on every single one of 29 doors.



Health & Safety

Much of the Center’s FFN programming has incorporated health and safety issues. Some programs addressed these issues directly. For example, CPR classes and home baby proofing. Other programs, such as the Play & Learn groups and Early Learning Circle, had resources available to caregivers as issues arose in the group. Finally, one of the key partnerships developed this year was with Safety First! Future collaborations will include caregiver education on vehicle and home safety. This partnership also led to a free, cooperative car and booster seat program at the Center.

School Readiness

The primary focus of the Whimsy School Readiness project was to increase the school readiness of children under the age of five. Activities were modeled after those implemented at Shoreline Family Center and met the objectives outlined in the Getting School Ready booklet. These objectives included healthy social emotional development; early literacy; fine motor skill development; number and letter recognition; and a more positive attitude towards school.

Accessing Community Resources

Having resources available to support caregivers was a key component of all ongoing activities. This happened in two ways. First, program staff themselves possessed knowledge of child development and available resources. Second, program staff was equipped with information sheets on a wide variety of topics related to the caregiving of children and the support of caregivers. Examples include information on free things to do with children and tips for TV viewing.

Caregiver Commitment and Self Awareness

It is our sincere belief that every caregiver is committed to the well being of the children in their care. It has been our experience this year that many caregivers do not recognize the importance of their role in the lives of the children in their care. A significant part of our work this year has been in raising the consciousness of caregivers about their role as caregivers and supporting them as they claim that additional identity. This happened almost exclusively in casual and informal interactions between staff and caregivers. For example, at a Whimsy event, Ngoc had an impromptu conversation with a 10-year-old boy who cares for younger siblings and cousins. When the boy shared this, they were making fruit loop necklaces. Ngoc's response was not to inundate him with a research-based barrage of responsibilities his caregiver role entailed. Rather she, more subtly, said "Oh really? That's cool! Then this is something you could do with them next time".

Nurturing Leadership

At the beginning of this year, our intent was to recruit participating caregivers to take on leadership of FFN programming. That this did not happen remains one of our chief disappointments. Because most of our programming this year consisted of one-time or short-term events we were never able to amass a large enough pool of engaged participants from which we might recruit. It is just now as we end the year (focusing entirely on on-going groups) that we are beginning to see signs of significant participant investment. Our first "train the trainer" event is scheduled for January. Similar to the path blazed by the *Good Beginnings Alliance Hawaii*, we will "grow" future facilitators out of our current Play & Learn participants.

Evaluation

Cascade People's Center participated in project evaluation with *Organizational Research Services*. In addition staff engaged in ongoing evaluation of the Center's FFN project through frequent and informal conversations with peers, participants, and our volunteer "caregiver consultants". Although the year-end formal reflection of our project proved insightful, the reporting requirements and forms were burdensome. Ultimately, it was the regular grantee meetings, the October national meeting, one Sparking Connections phone call, and hundreds of casual conversations which were the most useful in tailoring our resources to best meet the needs of caregivers and children.

Partnerships

Monthly gatherings with other grantees were invaluable to our work this year. A site visit to the Shoreline Family Center, participation in the October national meeting, and a Sparking Connections conference call were also useful opportunities to learn from others more experienced in this new field. Our most powerful peer connection has been with *Good Beginnings Alliance Hawaii*, in particular Wayna Buch. Her advice and feedback has helped tremendously in our efforts to replicate their successes.

Programs & Activities: February 1, 2004 – November 30, 2004

Note 1: All programs and activities were specifically geared to support children and FFN caregivers with the exception of the Family Resource Fair and the Block Party which were public events geared to raise awareness of school readiness, FFN caregiving and resources available to families.

Note 2: First column: number of events;
 Second column: number of adult participants;
 Third column: average number of adult participants;
 Fourth column: number of child participants; and
 Fifth column: average number of child participants.

	Activities	Adults	Adults	Children	Children
School Readiness Activity					
Babysitting Class	2	1	1	20	10
Children's art class	3	0	0	35	12
Totals:	5	1	1	55	11
Community Awareness					
Block Party	1	200	200	300	300
Totals:	1	200	200	300	300
Health/FFN Caregiver Class					
CPR	2	38	19	1	1
Totals:	2	38	19	1	1
FFN Caregiver Education/Support					
Child Development Training	1	5	5	0	0
Early Learning Circle	18	10	1	20	1
Family Resource Fair	1	208	208	51	51
FFN Caregiving Class	4	7	2	4	1
Play & Learn	23	17	1	20	1
Whimsy	19	29	2	65	3
Totals:	66	276	4	160	2
Month Totals:	74	515	7	516	7

Participants in direct FFN Programming: 272

Participants in Community Awareness Programming: 759

Hours of participation in FFN Programming: 484

Hours of participation in Community Awareness Programming: 1518

Community Awareness Report 2004

Raising community awareness of FFN caregiving has proved to be an excellent opportunity for program outreach. More significantly, it has increased the public's knowledge of FFN caregiving as prevalent, viable and worthy of support. Most powerfully, calling attention to the importance of FFN caregiving has provided caregivers themselves with a purposeful identity

in addition to uncle, sister, neighbor, or friend. When a caregiver recognizes himself as playing a vital role in his niece's development, he is able to access the full breadth of that new realm.

This year Cascade People's Center has implemented many and varied strategies to raise awareness of this wonderful work. While not able to record many of the more informal approaches, below is a fairly comprehensive list:

Press Releases

To: Initiative Newspaper, The Seattle Medium Newspaper Group, The NW Facts, and The Seattle Star Message:

Play and Learn

Did you know...**480,000 children in Washington are cared for by a family member, friend or neighbor?** These caregivers have valuable opportunities to provide guidance and activities that can promote the healthy development of the children in their care. **Play and Learn** is a **FREE playgroup** for toddlers and parents/caregivers offering opportunities for children to have fun, play and learn, socialize, and do arts and crafts and school readiness projects while parents/caregivers have the opportunity for support, education, and resources. Come connect with other families in the community! **Every Tuesday and Thursday from 10:30-12:30** at **Garfield Community Center** (2323 E Cherry). Snack and FREE books for kids! Presented by the Cascade People's Center.

If you would like more information, please contact Claudette at (206) 587-0320.

Letters

To: Annapolis Apts., Barton Place, Bay View Tower, Beacon Tower, Bel/Boy Apartments, Bell Tower, Bellevue & Olive Apts., Bryant Manor Apts., Capital Park, Cascade Court, Cedarvale House/Cedarvale Village, Center Park, Denny Terrace, Gideon-Matthews, Green Lake Plaza, Harvard Court, Heg/Phillips House, Holly Court, Holly Park, International Terrace, Jefferson Terrace, John Winthrop Apts, Leschi House, Lictonwood, Market House, Mercer Court, Michaelson Manor, New Holly, Olive Ridge, Olympic West, Primeau Place, Queen Anne Heights, Rainer Vista, Reunion House, Rosa Manor, Ross Manor, Sterling Court, The Cambridge, Tri-Court, Union James Apartments, University House, University West, Victorian Row, West Town View, Yesler Terrace, White Center News, KIRO-TV/CH 7/CBS, KONG TV-CH 6/16, KBKS 106.1FM, 106.5 FM, KCIS 630 AM, KCMS 105.3 FM, KING 98.1 FM, KRPM 1090 AM, Northwest Vietnamese Biweekly News, KVI 570 AM, KXPA 1540 AM, KYCW 96.5 FM, KZOK 102.5 FM, Chinese Business Journal, Ebttide, International Examiner, KJR 950 AM, KJR 95.7 FM, KBSG 1210 AM, KBSG 97.3 FM, KCIS 630 AM, KCMS 105.3 FM, Scanner News, KMPS 94.1 FM, KNWX 770 AM, Korea Central Daily, Korea Times, Polaris, The Catholic Northwest Progress

Message: (Attached to the Play and Learn flyer was this message)

(1) Do any of your residents look after young children during the day? Are they looking for something fun to do with their toddler? Play and Learn is a FREE playgroup for toddlers and parents/caregivers offering opportunities for children to have fun, play and learn, socialize, and do arts and crafts and school readiness projects while parents/caregivers have the opportunity for support, education, and resources. Come connect with other families in

the community! Every Tuesday and Thursday from 10:30-12:30 at Garfield Community Center (2323 E Cherry). Snack and FREE books for kids! Presented by the Cascade People's Center.

(2) Hi! Please check out this great program for kids and caregivers. Tell your employees and clients.

Faxes

To: Central Area Development Association, Seattle King County Housing Development Consortium, Common Ground, Community Psychiatric Clinic, El Centro de la Raza, Homesight, Mount Baker Housing Association, Pioneer Human Services, Plymouth Housing Group, Seattle Chinatown/International District Preservation and Development Authority

Message: (Attached to the Play and Learn flyer was this message)

Hi! Please check out this great program for kids and caregivers. Tell your employees and clients.

E-mails

To: Families posting on Craig's List to join playgroups and coops for the young children.

Message:

Hi! I was looking on Craig's List and I saw your posting. I wanted to share this information about FREE toddler playgroup at Garfield Community Center every Tues and Thurs. I'm not sure if going to Seattle's Central Area is too far for you, but this is a great group with great folks!

What: Cascade People's Center's PLAY AND LEARN

Who: Kids under age 5 and their parents/caregivers

When: Tues and Thurs 10:30-12:30

Where: Garfield Community Center 2323 E Cherry

Why: for kids to have fun, play and learn, socialize with other kids, do arts and crafts and school readiness projects. Parents/caregivers can meet other folks in the community, have the opportunity for support, education, and resources.

Cascade People's Center is a non-profit organization "Empowering people to grow strong, sustainable families and communities". Cascade People's Center is a program of Lutheran Community Services Northwest.

Phone Calls

To: Capitol Hill Housing Improvement Program, Rainier Beach Community Center, Program for Early Parent Support (PEPS), South Seattle Community College, North Seattle Community College, Seattle Central, Community College, Seattle Vocational Institute

Message:

Hi, this is Malia/Ngoc from Cascade People's Center. We have received a grant to do free Play and Learn groups to support kids and their caregivers.

INSERT: i.e. when calling Senior Centers, we'd say "And this is especially geared toward grandparents.

We would love to talk with you about having a Play and Learn group at your site. When you get a chance, please call me at 587-0320. Thanks and have a great day, Malia/Ngoc.

Presentations

To: Downtown Rotary, South Lake Union Friends and Neighbors, Tammy McCorkle at Low Income Housing Institute, Seattle Housing Authority, Puget Sound Home Depots (in partnership with other grantees), North Seattle Family Center, Southwest Family Center, International Family Center, Rainer Beach Family Center, Family Works, Leschi Community Council, Sound Youth Americorps

Message:

Did you know... ***480,000 children in Washington are cared for by a family member, friend or neighbor?***

Examples: stories inserted.

Improving the quality of care provided by families, friends, and neighbors helps children succeed in school and in life. Cascade People's Center supports kids and FFN caregivers through a variety of programs including Play and Learn groups.

Time for questions.

Community Forum

To: Capitol Hill Lions Club

Message:

Did you know... ***480,000 children in Washington are cared for by a family member, friend or neighbor?***

Examples: stories inserted.

Improving the quality of care provided by families, friends, and neighbors helps children succeed in school and in life.

Discussion, sharing of personal experiences

Cascade People's Center supports kids and FFN caregivers through a variety of programs including Play and Learn groups.

Personal Conversations

To: Meadowbrook View Apartments, Michelle Hawley of Seattle Housing Association, Andria of Housing Resource Group and Ellen Zient of Yesler Terrace, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Safeco Inc., Ted Divina of Central Area Neighborhood Service Center, Royal Alley-Barnes of Seattle Parks Department, King Street Cooperative Preschool, Odessa Brown Children's Clinic, Douglas Truth Library Sue Siegenthaler at New Holly Family Center (scheduled), Eric Pettigrew of Washington State Legislature, informal conversations with friends and family of CPC staff

Message:

(1) Family, friend, and neighbors care for many kids. There are resources available to support those caregivers. Cascade People's Center has many Play and Learn groups to support and enhance the skills of caregivers and to support school readiness. Are you interested in hearing more about having a group located in one of your apartment complexes?

(2) FFN caregivers play a vital role in a child's life. Cascade People's Center has free programs available to support kids and FFN caregivers.

Literacy Event/Book Giveaway (in process)

Description: Free children's books distributed at a local grocery store to raise awareness of Play and Learn groups available to support kids and caregivers. Each book has a bookmark inside it describing the programs. Copies of the bookmark and letter are attached at the end of this report.

Collaborations

With: Anita Adams of Garfield Community Center, Cassandra Cress of Aki Kurose Village Apartments, Miller Community Center, PEMCO Insurance, Brittany Blue of Child Safety Project, New Hope Baptist Church

Commitment: Work in partnership with each other to support FFN caregivers

Center for Human Services FFN 2004 Report

Emily is the mother of six boys, two of whom are pre-school aged. Seven days a week she plays the role of “stay-at-home mother”. Three of those days, she also plays the role of Family, Friend and Neighbor Caregiver. Six months ago, Emily assumed the responsibility of providing care for her neighbor’s 3-year-old son, Skyler. Skyler’s father worked full-time, and his mother, Tina, had major knee surgery and was on bed rest for a month. After a full recovery, Skyler’s mom went back to work, outside the home. At that time, Emily offered to continue to care for Skyler so that her neighbor would not have to pay for child care. Emily chose to take on this added responsibility in order to support her neighbor and friend, and because it provided her own children with a chance to socialize frequently with another child.

Skyler’s mom had participated in various programs offered at the Shoreline Family Support Center and had heard about the First Steps for Caregivers Program. She advised that Emily look into this because she was indeed a Family, Friend and Neighbor Caregiver. Soon after, Emily,



with her own two boys and Skyler, began participating in the program. Within three months of becoming involved in this program, Emily’s awareness of her important role as an FFN caregiver has had a significant impact on her. She now recognizes much more clearly the importance of using opportunities for the children in her care to learn and expand their developmental skills. Emily provides clear examples of how she spends her time with the boys and Skyler differently than before she started the program. No longer do they watch movies or television as a primary activity. They play games, do arts and crafts, sing songs and read books together. Even lunch preparation has become a group activity. Skyler’s

mother, Tina has also commented on how impressed she is with the things Emily does with her son. Now, Tina requests that Emily share the information she receives in the program so that Tina can use it in her own home.

As Emily’s experience illustrates, caregivers and children are greatly supported through the First Steps for Caregivers Program. And learning about child development, school readiness and other information concerning a growing child are not the only things that a person has access to through our program. The relationships they develop and the support they receive from each other and the program facilitators are fundamental assets, as well. This support is demonstrated in various forms, whether it is a chance to talk to other caregivers and parents about experiences with raising children, or a chance to receive specially requested support and resources from the facilitator. The relationships that are built between caregivers allow them to share their talents, personal stories and resources to the benefit of all involved.”

How and why we became interested in family, friend and neighbor care:

In serving the Shoreline community and getting to know the individuals who constitute that community, it came to our attention that many children in the Shoreline area were being cared for by individuals their parents knew rather than attending a child care program. In order to ensure that these children were receiving opportunities to develop school readiness skills in a positive learning environment, we decided that a program specifically designed for family,

friend, and neighbor caregivers would be highly beneficial. To this end, we designed a class in which young children could come to the Center to participate in school readiness activities, while their caregivers received hands on training and support by participating in their own class and engaging in activities with the children.

In our eyes, this program has successfully reached and empowered numerous family, friend, and neighbor caregivers. In fact, the program has been so highly valued and recognized by the caregivers in our community that we have had a waiting list to participate in the classes for quite some time. As a result of this pressing need for increased services to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers, we received an additional grant and were able to offer a second FFN class beginning in the summer of 2004. We are excited about this expansion and are grateful for the opportunity to meet the needs of the members of our community.

How we decided what approach to use and with whom:

At the Center for Human Services Family Support Center, all of our programs and services reflect family support principles. Therefore, our approach entailed strengthening, empowering and increasing social support for the caregivers.

In constructing and designing our family, friend, and neighbor program, we thought it very valuable to strengthen and empower caregivers through modeling and hands on experience. Rather than sitting the caregivers down for a lecture, we felt that the most effective way to portray a positive learning environment for young children was to create that environment ourselves in order to provide the opportunity for caregivers to see what they were leaning in action. As a result, the classes we offer in support of family, friend, and neighbor caregivers are structured so that the children participate in school readiness activities while the caregivers help them with those activities and receive instruction on how to improve the learning environment for their children. With this approach the caregivers are given the chance to demonstrate their methods of interaction with the children and those methods that are positive and effective can be reinforced and applauded by our staff.



While the structure of our FFN programs was designed to support the individual strengths of each caregiver and child, the target population we hoped to serve through these classes was any individual caring for a child not cared for in a child care program. Consequently, we have several aunts, grandparents, family friends, and mother and father caregivers that benefit from the support and education they receive in our FFN program.

How we reached and recruited participants:

Our primary method of reaching potential participants was through our flyer for the FFN program, in which it clearly states: “Do you take care of a family, friend or neighbor’s child?” The flyer introduced the program purpose and allowed interested parties to contact us for more information.

Each month we have tried to do some sort of outreach specific to FFN. We have presented at meetings of local grandparents raising grandchildren, and various community resource events.

It is amazing how much ‘word of mouth’ contributes to the recruiting of participants. We have noticed that current FFN participants in our programs frequently talk about the program to family and friends who are also caring for children. The role they play in spreading the word has been very helpful in reaching participants.

Oftentimes people walk into the center looking for activities to do with the children in their care. A tactic that we have used with relative caution, is inquiring into whether or not they utilize family, friend or neighbor care. In engaging them in this conversation, we have noticed that many people don’t regard themselves as FFN caregivers. Through this conversation, we are sometimes able to recruit them for our FFN programs.

How we incorporated research, cultural knowledge and other types of knowledge into delivering our service:

Having a strength-based approach to all services provided at the Shoreline Family Support Center, we constantly strive to make the environment in our classes as welcoming of all individuals as possible. Our classes are based on the Family Support Philosophy. The service we provide is school readiness, socialization and support for children and caregivers, however the ways in which we deliver such a service is from the Family Support standpoint. We strive to create an environment that encourages, strengthens and increases support for families.

In terms of incorporating cultural knowledge, in our FFN classes, we have very culturally diverse participants. The following information indicates the genders and ages of the caregivers and children, the ethnicity they identify themselves with and their primary language.

Shoreline FFN class:

Caregivers:

Gender	Age	Primary Language	Ethnicity
Female	24	Spanish	Latino
Female	28	Spanish	Latino
Female	29	Spanish	Latino
Female	29	Spanish	Latino
Female	30	Spanish	Latino
Female	31	Spanish	Latino
Female	31	Korean	Korean
Female	33	Spanish	Latino
Female	36	Spanish	Latino
Female	37	Spanish	Latino
Female	38	Korean	Korean
Female	39	English	Filipino
Female	41	English	Caucasian
Male	36	Spanish	Latino

Children:

Gender	Age	Primary Language	Ethnicity
Female	3	Korean	Korean
Female	4	Korean	Korean

Female	4	Spanish	Latino
Female	5	Spanish	Latino
Male	2	Spanish	Latino
Male	2	Spanish	Latino
Male	3	Spanish	Latino
Male	3	Spanish	Latino
Male	4	Spanish	Latino
Male	4	Spanish	Latino
Male	4	English	Caucasian
Male	5	English	Filipino
Male	4	English	Filipino
Male	4	Spanish	Latino
Male	5	Spanish	Latino
Male	5	Korean	Korean
Male	5	Spanish	Latino
Male	5	Spanish	Latino

Ballinger Homes FFN class:

Caregivers:

Gender	Age	Primary Language	Ethnicity
Female	21	Unknown	South East Asian
Female	25	English	Caucasian
Female	26	English	Filipino
Female	28	Somali	African (Black)
Female	30	English	Caucasian
Female	30	Unknown	African (Black)
Female	32	Korean	Korean
Female	32	Unknown	Latino
Female	35	Somali	African (Black)
Female	36	Russian	Eastern European
Female	36	Spanish	Latino
Female	48	Somali	African (Black)
Male	40	Urdu	Other Asian or Multi-ethnic Asian
Male	46	Unknown	African (Black)

Children:

Gender	Age	Primary Language	Ethnicity
Female	1	English	Caucasian
Female	3	Spanish	Latino
Female	4	Somali	African (Black)
Female	3	Russian	Eastern European
Female	3	English	Filipino
Female	4	English	Caucasian
Female	4	Somali	African (Black)
Female	5	English	Caucasian
Male	3	Somali	African (Black)
Male	1	Somali	African (Black)
Male	2	Urdu	Other Asian or Multi-ethnic Asian
Male	3	Somali	African (Black)

Male	3	Unknown	African (Black)
Male	4	Somali	African (Black)
Male	4	English	Latino
Male	4	Unknown	South East Asian
Male	5	Russian	Eastern European
Male	6	Spanish	Latino
Male	4	Urdu	Other Asian or Multi-ethnic Asian

We have seen how beneficial it is to our participants that we include their languages in the activities we do with their children. For example: when we are doing literacy activities with the children we encourage the caregivers' participation to provide the activity in not only English, but using Spanish and Korean as well. Many of these children speak English, however in the home and in their form of care they speak their native languages. In doing so, we are providing learning opportunities for the children to increase their English skills, while at the same time retaining and appreciating their home languages. For those participants that only speak English, we are providing opportunities for them to be exposed to and experience other languages.

Being aware of the diversity amongst our participants we make sure to incorporate cultural knowledge when we are developing our curriculum. For example: as the facilitators, we try and stay away from focusing class activities on events and holidays. In doing so, we do not glorify certain cultural traditions, or on the other hand, not even acknowledge others' cultural traditions. Another example is specific to the Ballinger Homes class in which a large percentage of the group is Somali. These Somali families do not eat anything with gelatin in it. Part of our curriculum involves a snack time. With this knowledge of the Somali families' culture we make sure not to provide such snacks.

Incorporating research about school readiness has played a major role in what occurs in our classrooms. In planning and implementing the activities that the children engage in, we try to make sure that the activities are teaching age appropriate developmental skills. In order for us to make sure we are providing such activities, we rely heavily on child development literature, as well as interviews and guidance from professionals in the field.

A particular publication that upon which we rely heavily for curriculum development is the bi-monthly publication The Mailbox: The Idea Magazine for Teachers. This publication assists us in developing age appropriate learning activities for the children in our classes. These magazines provide activities with an emphasis on school readiness and phases of a pre-school age child's development.

Another strong influence on our school readiness activities for the children, and encouragement of school readiness support from the caregivers is the collaboration with Susan Hakoda, a service provider from Child Care Resources. In our collaboration with her, we were able to learn best practice around promoting skill development within young children, and in general providing age-appropriate learning activities and interactions.



We use this research to ensure that our activities are educational and assist in skill development, while at the same time enjoyable for the children.

How we kept participants interested and engaged in our service

We believe that our programs are not just an enriching experience for the children but worth the time of the caregivers as well. To keep the caregivers interested it was essential that we reminded them of the important role they play in the lives of these children. Once the caregivers realize the impact they are capable of having on the lives and learning of these children, they become more engaged in learning how to strengthen their potential impact.

In developing our program each quarter, we make sure to get feedback from the participants regarding what they would like to learn and what activities they would like to do, and if they are returning participants what they would change about the program. Allowing the participants to have some ownership over what the program entails, seems to affect their interest in the program.

In addition, one of the most fundamental goals of our FFN program is to provide activities through which the caregivers will become engaged with the children. For example, we are constantly encouraging the caregivers to help the child when needed rather than helping the child ourselves. We also design activities that require cooperation from both the caregiver and child (i.e. throwing a ball back and forth). In doing so, the caregiver becomes engaged in the activities that are provided and is also encouraged to work and play with the child. When this occurs, the caregiver then becomes interested and captivated in the activities and structure of the program.

Finally, it is important to note that the activities provided in our FFN program are designed to be fun and captivating. Instead of lecturing the caregivers and forcing them to do specific menial tasks, we encourage them to participate in conversation and choose the activities they find most beneficial for themselves and the child. This is encouraged so that the caregivers will feel free to do what interests them, rather than being forced to participate in an activity they do not find appealing.

How we addressed health and safety issues:

As part of our class sessions, caregivers engage in educational discussions that are centered on topics relevant to caring for young children. Because health and safety, both within the home and in the community, are highly relevant to the well-being of young children, several of our caregiver discussions were focused on these two topics.

In order to fulfill the request of one of our participants, one discussion topic was learning what needs to be put into a first-aid kit designed for children. During the discussion, the facilitator handed out a first-aid kit checklist and explained why each component was important.

In addition to the first aid information, other caregiver discussion topics centered on home safety and nutrition for children. While discussing appropriate nutrition for children, a nutritionist who works for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program visited our class as a guest lecturer. She covered issues such as what the responsibility is of both the caregiver and the child in regards to feeding times, and also discussed with the caregivers how a child's overall health benefits from proper nutrition. This discussion proved to be highly valuable and informative to the caregivers. Many of them stated that they were thankful to have some direction and

increased knowledge about child nutrition in order to better deal with the struggles of meal times at home.

Finally, it is important to note that health and safety guidelines are widely upheld in the classroom at all times. Children always wash their hands prior to consuming the daily snack, are constantly encouraged to walk when inside the building, are not allowed to put any non-food items into their mouths, etc. By enforcing these rules, the caregivers are able to witness simple ways that they can ensure their child is in a safe and healthy environment while in their care.

How we addressed school readiness and school success (physical, emotional, cognitive and social):

A significant component of our FFN program revolves around the notion of school readiness for children ages 2-5. Our program consists of two classes for caregivers and their preschool aged children. Each session includes two two-hour sessions each week in which the children participate in school readiness activities while caregivers gain the support, knowledge, and resources necessary to provide a positive learning environment for the children. The class continues in this fashion for the duration of one quarter, typically about 10 weeks. For the most part, the same group of participants returns to take the class each quarter, and depending on the number that returns, we often have room for a few new participants.

An aspect of school readiness that is incorporated into the structure of the class is routine. Each class session follows the same routine, preparing children to expect what is going to happen next, and learn to understand what is expected of them to make transitions throughout the class time. For the first hour, children and caregivers participate together in circle time and in doing the activities. The second hour, the group works together to clean-up the room and prepare for lunch. During lunch, the caregivers are given a chance to talk to other caregivers or sit down with the facilitator and talk about issues of concern or discuss information and resources. We believe that school readiness doesn't exclusively mean getting the child prepared to enter kindergarten, but preparing the caregiver for the transition as well.

School readiness and school success for the child involves the development of various skills that represent the different realms of the young child. Being school ready assumes that a child has developed age appropriate physical, emotional, cognitive and social skills. Our classes revolve around providing activities, experiences and opportunities in which children can acquire and practice these skills. For example: We provide many open-ended art projects, in which a child is able to explore and create on their own. We try to provide at least one sensory experience each session (e.g., water table, sand table, play dough etc.) These sensory activities contribute to the motor skills involved in the physical domain of child development. For example: depending on the age of the child it may be easier for an older child to pick beans out of a bucket of sand, whereas for a younger child with smaller hands it might be more difficult. A younger child might need the help of a cup to scoop up the beans. For the older children who are in the early stages of letter and word recognition we oftentimes set up a table specific to literacy, which includes different writing utensils, as well as words and letters to manipulate. These activities can contribute to motor skills (the ability to hold a pen) and to cognitive development, the actual skills of reading and writing.

MORE ACTIVITY EXAMPLES

Having the caregivers in the classroom with the children offers an opportunity for class facilitators to share the importance of school-readiness with the caregivers. In addition to verbally reinforcing the valuable role these caregivers play in the development of school readiness skills in these children, we strongly encourage the caregivers to be engaged in the activities with the children. In doing so, the caregivers are able to receive hands-on experience in providing an environment that fosters the development of school readiness skills in the children.

How we helped participants learn about and use other community resources:

One of the primary services we offer is a resource and referral service. When participants come to our programs, we make it a point to talk with them about what they might want or might be looking for in the community (e.g., community activities, access to healthcare, rental assistance, etc.). If they mention a specific service they need or want, we try our best to connect them to that service, either through our own programs at CHS or by connecting them with other agencies in our community. Examples of such referrals and resources provided include participants in our FFN programs becoming involved in other Family Center activities, being connected to Head Start, being assisted in applying for medical coupons, etc.

Since our FFN classes are held only two times a week, we make it a point to inform our participants about other events and activities that are happening in the community that they could attend. Often we inquire about scheduled events at the local library, local bookstore and community common area. We have learned that our FFN participants like to be able to take the children in their care to fun events, sometimes just to get out of the house. We make it easy for them to find activities to do, by doing some research to share with them places they can take their children.

How we helped caregivers become committed to providing good learning and growing experiences for children in their care and become more aware of the importance of what they do:

As an essential step to helping our caregivers become committed to being involved in their children's growth and development on all levels, we had to commend them and recognize them for the job that they do. Once the caregivers felt they were appreciated and that they had a purpose beyond just supervising the children in their care, the more apt they were to be committed to being involved.

We have realized that oftentimes when a child is nearing the age of entering kindergarten is when caregivers become particularly observant and interested in whether or not their child has acquired the skills necessary to succeed in school. We encourage early action. The caregivers begin to see that they can provide early learning opportunities for their children that are fun, and do not overwhelm or put too much pressure on a child to acquire "academic" skills. It certainly helps to support the caregivers by giving them ideas of things they can do in the home that support early learning. It seemed to help that we not only were verbally explaining ideas, but that we were proving that it is easy to do and can be done. On several occasions, the educational experiences we provided for the caregivers helped them to really begin to understand what they are capable of creating. Since the caregivers are engaging in the activities with the

children, you see how they light up when they observe a child learning a new skill. Once they become aware of the impact they are capable of making, the more involved and committed they seem to become to helping create new learning experiences.

How we nurtured leadership qualities among our participants:

One of the fundamental goals we have in serving family, friend, and neighbor caregivers is to model/demonstrate leadership qualities and appropriate ways to teach and nurture children. We meet this goal in a variety of ways.

To promote leadership amongst our caregivers, we use them as a source of outreach. Frequently, people inquire about participating in our classes because they have heard about the program through a current participant. With our Latino families in particular, they tend to recruit other family members to participate. We have noticed with our Latino participants in the Shoreline class, that as a family they work together to make sure the children within that family are in good care. Having the family, (i.e. aunts, uncles, cousins) all participating in the class together has become an extraordinary form of FFN care that our Latino families in particular value. Our class at Ballinger Homes is a unique form of outreach, because those participants then recruit other families that live in the Ballinger Homes Apartments that are unaware of the program that is held right in their community.

In the Shoreline class, in particular, we encourage the caregivers to take ownership of the program. We provide this leadership opportunity during the snack/lunch time of our class. At the beginning of each quarter, each caregiver volunteers to bring lunch one day, for the rest of the group. This somewhat modest opportunity has profound effects on these caregivers. They are given the chance to lead the lunch time and at the same time share their favorite foods and cooking specialties with the other caregivers and children. Providing these lunches has created cohesion between the caregivers as well. During this time the caregivers oftentimes gather informally around the table and exchange recipes, stories of the children in their care, and in general take time to get to know one another.

Caregivers are also given opportunities to co-facilitate activities. For example: a new participant joined the Shoreline class this past quarter, and she had experience teaching Sunday school at her church. She offered to teach the class new songs. For two weeks, each session this caregiver was given the opportunity to work with the children and contribute to the class as a whole by sharing her knowledge.

As we facilitate the class sessions, we explain to the caregivers what we are doing and how those actions benefit the children we are working with. With this hands-on demonstration while the caregivers are present, it is our hope that they will then be able to practice their new skills both in the classroom and at home.

While in class, we encourage the caregivers to work closely with the children so that they will gain experience in helping the children develop school readiness skills. We also use the caregivers as a way to teach the children about listening and obeying adults. We encourage caregivers to not just work on activities with their own children, but to assist other's children as

well. A valuable lesson for a child is to be able to discriminate between adults that are helping him, but also know that each adult in that room can be relied upon.

As facilitators of the class, and although some of the children might refer to us as “teacher”, it does not mean that we are the leaders of the group. As facilitators we might provide the learning activity, but we encourage our caregivers to be leaders of the activity, to discuss with the children the procedures, the rules, and what is going on during the activity. Once the facilitator initiates the activity, the leadership then lies in the hands of the caregivers, working together to encourage the children to complete the task. As facilitators, we nurture leadership qualities within our participants by involving them in every aspect of the class, whether it is the design of the class, the activities we do, or in the everyday routine and occurrences.

How we have participated in evaluation efforts and what we learned through the evaluation process:

In the past, it has been the custom to give caregiver participants an evaluation form upon completion of the quarter. This tool assesses the participants’ satisfaction with our classes as well as records what they believe they have learned and acquired as a result of participation in the program. From these tools, we have been able to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs and have been able to incorporate that information into future planning and construction of the programs.

In addition to the caregiver feedback, we have also completed monthly reports and reflections that assess what we, as the facilitators, believe is taking place within the class. In those reflections we highlight occurrences both in strengthening caregiver capacity as well as in our efforts to reach out to our community.

Prior to the start of each new quarter, we hold an orientation for all returning and new participants. During this orientation we take time to gain verbal feedback from the participants about what they hope to do or learn in the months to come. What is discussed is taken into consideration when planning the quarter’s curriculum. As the facilitators, we are particularly interested in the opinions of the returning participants, regarding what they liked about the prior quarter’s class, and if there were any changes they thought needed to be made. The sole purpose of having this discussion is to know as facilitators what the participants want and whether or not we are meeting their needs and desires.

How we participated in and maintained partnership relationships with other organizations involved in family, friend and neighbor work:

This past quarter one of our FFN classes was held at a new location. We were able to make a “traveling class” because of partnerships with other organizations. For example: our partnership with Ballinger Homes Family Center enabled us to conduct the class at a different site for the first time. This partnership has been a continued success because of our efforts to maintain a healthy relationship with that site.

The relationship was maintained because of our efforts to mold the class around the needs of a new population. The way the class was structured originally turned out not to be the best fit for the participants at the new site. Therefore, in order to meet the needs of the Ballinger Homes Family Center and to continue to maintain a healthy working partnership with the agency, we

adjusted the structure of the class. The partnership would be worthless if we did not adequately meet the needs of their participants, and since we made efforts to ensure that those needs were indeed being met, our relationship and continual partnership with Ballinger Homes has stayed healthy.

The Shoreline Family Support Center is a site for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) – a supplemental nutrition program. As facilitators of the FFN groups, we have developed a partnership with them in which the nutritionist on staff has held discussions with the caregivers about healthy eating habits. She has shared with them recipes for nutritional snacks, and ideas of healthy foods to eat that are relatively easy to make, when they have limited amount of time to prepare a meal. Maintaining this partnership, to some degree, is reliant on what the nutritionist observes of the class when she is not working with the group. Our class is often held at the same time that the WIC staff is working with families. They are able to witness our class in action and observe how we are supporting FFN caregivers and their children. I believe this contributes to their willingness and excitement to contribute their expertise.

A critical collaboration we are involved in is with the other FFN Grantee Organizations. During our monthly meetings in which we report on the previous month's peak moments in regards to our efforts to strengthen caregiver capacity and building community awareness, we are exposed to the work concerning FFN caregivers that other organizations are doing. This is a great learning experience, because we are able to learn more effective ways of reaching these caregivers, as well as different avenues in which the agency can go about supporting them. Having the chance as a group to share with one another our success stories and our roadblocks has been critical to our continued efforts to support FFN caregivers and the children in their care.

Children's Services of Sno-Valley Family Friends & Neighbors 2004 Report

Eight women gather at Children's Services of Sno-Valley, anticipating the morning's presentation. As participants in the Family, Friend & Neighbor project, they have come to learn about creating learning environments in their homes, and activities they can do with children in their care. The mood of the group is friendly, casual, and interested. The presenter, herself a mother, child care provider, and teacher, has arranged a wide assortment of materials near the front of the room, catching the eye and interest of everyone who enters.

The meeting begins, as usual, with facilitated conversation. Going around the table, each woman tells why she has come, and what her connection is to children. A grandmother and aunt care for their 18-month-old grandson/nephew three days a week; another grandmother has full custody of her 2-year-old grandson; a third grandmother cares for her five young grandchildren in their parents' homes; three at-home mothers frequently care for the children of their friends; a mom cares for an infant three days a week, while she is home with her toddler; and a mom new to the area is here for learning and fellowship. Differences in age, income, education, and experience are balanced by the common interest in providing quality care for the young children in their charge.



As the women engage in making playdough, fingerpaint, and trail mix, they share stories. Terry tells of a disappointing trip to the neighborhood park with her toddler grandson. After planning, packing, and hurriedly walking through the neighborhood with all its distractions, she and Aidan finally arrived exhausted and bad-tempered, only to have the child ask immediately to go home. The frustration in Terry's voice is evident, as she vows to stay at home in the future because going out is just not worth the trouble. Her story falls on sympathetic ears, as her good intentions and her disappointment are acknowledged in lively conversation. Seamlessly, the wisdom of the group emerges: what if the *walk* to the park is enough in itself? Including the child in planning and preparation, talking about what they will do when they arrive, deciding which route to take, going over safety rules, preparing a snack together, packing a backpack with "necessities," getting dressed for the weather, saying hello to a neighbor, petting a dog, jumping in puddles, finding a feather, smelling the flowers....all combine to make the experience of walking to the park rich in learning, bonding, and fun. Terry's face relaxes, her eyes twinkle, and she chuckles as she shares a moment of illumination: she's been making it harder than it needs to be. "All I have to do is slow down, and go at his pace!" she exclaims, as a world of possibilities beckons.

How and why we became interested in family, friend and neighbor care

Children's Services of Sno-Valley's interest in learning more about the role of FFN caregivers stemmed from our desire to provide a comprehensive program of support and education all members of our community who play important roles affecting the development of children. Research by the Human Policy Services Center at the University of Washington indicating the high number of children in FFN care in our communities, and the need for those caregivers to

receive support and education, along with the opportunity for funding to participate in a regional effort to learn more, encouraged us to become involved.

As Children's Services of Sno-Valley is the sole family support center in the Snoqualmie Valley, serving the five communities of North Bend, Snoqualmie, Fall City, Carnation and Duvall, a project seeking to assist FFN caregivers was a natural fit. Providing support and education to FFN caregivers aligns with the mission of CSSV: "To nurture, educate, strengthen, and support children and their families so that each has the opportunity and skills to reach their full potential."

A program targeting FFN caregivers and children in FFN care fits in well with, and enhances, existing programs: toddler-parent/caregiver playgroups; 3 & 4 year old preschool (including ECEAP program); parenting education; parent-child interaction training; parent-run child care cooperative; support group for grandparents providing kinship care; birth to three early intervention screening and therapy; and strengthening community through family enrichment activities.

How we decided what approach to use, and with whom

We began by establishing a Community Advisory Board including our local Children's Librarian, a Public Health Nurse, parents, FFN caregivers, and CSSV's Early Childhood Education Program Director. We met to brainstorm ideas, and evaluate outreach strategies. As the project progressed, our definition of "an FFN caregiver" became much more flexible as we encountered caregivers who didn't neatly fit into one definition.

Mindful of our role in the community, we designed our project to be inclusive. People caring for the children of family members and friends, parents using FFN care, parents who occasionally care for the children of others, custodial grandparents, and non-licensed providers working in license-exempt facilities all were welcome to attend trainings and utilize program resources. While the diversity of our target group posed obvious challenges in terms of recruitment, participants reported benefiting from the variety of perspectives shared, issues raised, and topics covered.

Much of our learning came through three years of trial and error, as detailed in sections below. We also gained much through sharing in learning circles with other grantees, and from learning about resources, research and methods through the Sparking Connections community. Underlying all our work is adherence to family support principles and practice.

How we reached or recruited participants

Spending time out in the community is by far the most effective method of reaching FFN caregivers. In general we had the best results from one-on-one conversations or direct referrals. Flyers, handouts, newspaper articles and the like may have raised community awareness, but generated few attendees. We've ordered the list below in mostly chronological order, to illustrate the progression of our methods:

- Recruited from CSSV program participants (preschool parents/grandparents, kinship support group, childcare cooperative), child care providers

- Regular articles in CSSV newsletter (1200 circulation)
- Cold calls to preschool and child care providers asking for references
- Flyer sent to elementary schools, libraries, churches, licensed providers
- Valpak direct mail “coupon” sent to 10,000 addresses
- Flyers in English & Spanish (for different meetings) posted around town, in neighborhoods, at churches
- Press release and meeting notices in local weekly newspapers
- On-screen advertisement at the North Bend Theatre
- Sandwich board displayed at main intersection prior to meetings
- Program information provided to Eastside nanny services
- Program information in community newsletters
- Attended community summer celebrations: Sandblast festival in Duvall, Alpine Days in North Bend, 4th of July in Carnation, Fall City Days to distribute information
- Attended *Health Fair* at Sno-Valley Senior Center in Carnation, and facilitated the creation of a CSSV-sponsored Grandparent Support Group at the Center.
- An article featuring our FFN project appeared in the Snoqualmie Valley Record (article is attached). The reporter interviewed the Project Coordinator and two participating families.
- Created an FFN distribution list comprising 50 providers and parents.
- Hosted a Family Night Fiesta focused on connecting with the Latino community.
- Hosted Child Care Resources Van visit to our agency; announcement appeared in Eastside newspapers.
- A regularly updated FFN section was added to our remodeled website.
- Attended Valley Providers’ Network meetings, attended by 30 participants representing 20 agencies
- Participated in FACES East meetings and parent/caregiver education conferences.
- Regularly supplied resources and information to caregivers and parents at toddler & preschool library storytimes and local community indoor playground
- Offered training sessions to employees of local businesses
- Offered partnerships with local businesses

How we incorporated research, cultural knowledge and other types of knowledge into delivering our service

Cultural competence

- Recruited a leader in the Latino community to help connect with families and translate during meetings.
- Bilingual, bicultural presenters from Child Care Resources facilitated some meetings.
- A bilingual, bicultural family support specialist was on our staff for ten months.
- Building on relationships within the community to offer support to Habitat for Humanity families.
- Project Coordinator attended *Real Choices, Real Lives* conference on families whose children have developmental disabilities.
- Presentation given by our Early Childhood Development Specialist to FFN caregivers on how to recognize if a child is not developing typically.

- Project Coordinator attended training in Strengthening Multicultural Awareness for Service Delivery Excellence.
- Became aware of issues around male involvement and full-time dads; partnered with local educational district and Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) representative.
- With our ECEAP and Family Support programs, FFN co-sponsored an evening Spanish Family Gathering attended by 11 Latino families. With support from Spanish-speaking facilitators, participants practiced calling our community's new, free shuttle bus. The bus, driver, and dispatcher visited on-site, and participants had a chance to meet them and familiarize themselves with the bus.

Community awareness & service delivery

- Project Coordinator attended Asset Based Community Development training and applied ABCD principals to community outreach.
- Used Sparking Connections report from Families & Work Institute.
- Created and utilized parent, grandparent and caregiver surveys to gather information on how families are meeting their child care needs.

School Readiness

- Project Coordinator attended Interchange VII, *Schools and Human Services Working Together for Kids!* To learn about essentials of risk and protective factors, the asset model, and community organizing process and results
- Project coordinator attended *Partnering for Success Conference* sponsored by Washington Alliance for Better Schools. Dr. Karen Mapp was the keynote speaker.

Curriculum

- Project Coordinator learned research-based curriculum on media literacy.
- Attended STARS training on Dramatic Play and Storytelling
- Made extensive use of Talaris Research Institute's work on emotional intelligence.
- Adapted Parent-Child Interaction Training on positive discipline for FFN providers.
- Project Coordinator is trained in communication skills – how to manage difficult conversations that may arise with the parents of children in your care.
- Creativity & Craft – research-based ideas for art projects, music, activities and games that support early childhood development.
- Learning Styles – different ways children learn; activities to build on their strengths, and strengthen their weaknesses
- Multiple Intelligences theory (Howard Gardner)
- Positive Discipline: Teaching Limits with Love – viewing and discussion of Dr. T. Berry Brazelton's video, part of the *I Am Your Child* parenting program.
- The Power of Play – how and why kids play, why play is important, what play looks like, how play influences social development.
- Supporting School Readiness Begins at Birth – what children really need to be ready for Kindergarten; presented the Getting School Ready Resource Kit.
- Purchased English and Spanish versions of the *I Am Your Child/Soy Tu Hijo* videos

- Purchased *Padres Activos de Hoy* parent education curriculum to be used in cross-program collaboration with our Parent Education and Family Support programs.

How we kept participants interested and engaged in our service

“I just had the worst day of my life – I had to come.”

“I realized that I’m not alone.”

“It’s so good to know that I’m not the only one who struggles.”

The above quotes from program participants illustrate the ease of maintaining interest in our service. Contributing factors to program quality were:

- Informal meeting structure including time for participants to share their personal stories, struggles, and successes.
- Free childcare provided on site.
- Asking participants to identify their needs, and responding to those needs.
- Research-based information and reference material.
- Everything from connection to community resources, referral to other CSSV programs (PCIT, ECEAP, Toddler playgroup, Child care Cooperative), information on specific topics).
- Bringing meetings to community center.
- Developing personal relationships with and among participants.
- Caregivers are most likely to accept new information when it is paired with practical applications they can use immediately. For example, as part a discussion about positive discipline, include handouts listing 100 ways to praise a child, and 100 praisable behaviors.

How we addressed health and safety issues

- Our caregiver curriculum includes basic Health, Safety & Nutrition.
- Presentation to caregivers by a public health nurse from the Child Care Health Program.
- Distributed food pyramid, first aid chart, recipes and other nutritional information.
- How Children Experience Stress – defining stress, stressors for children, recognizing signs of stress, coping behaviors, self esteem as a “stress buffer.”

How we addressed school readiness and school success (physical, emotional, mental and social)

Irvina is a family home child care provider. Recently she has been pushed, to the point of conflict, by one of her parents to “do more academics” with the preschool-aged children in her care. By “academics” this parent mean directed activities such as worksheets, alphabet and number drill, and elementary classroom-type instruction. As happens under the pressure of criticism, Irvina began to doubt herself, thinking “maybe I’m not doing enough after all.” After learning about current thinking on school readiness, and how children learn best through self-directed play, Irvina feels reassured that her program is on target. In fact, she is now so interested in the topic that she has created a “School Readiness Notebook” to help guide her in improving her home-based curriculum. Irvina says she is “prepared for the next parent, and humbly vindicated” in her play-based approach to early childhood education. “I will continue to research, and learn more. This was a poke in the behind for me. Thank you.”

All caregiver trainings connect children’s social, emotional, physical and cognitive development with success in school. This premise is at the foundation of our curriculum and discussions. We have made extensive use of the following material from *From Heart Start: The Emotional Foundations of School Readiness*, a publication of Zero to Three (www.zerotothree.org).

Defining School Readiness: What comes to mind when you hear the term “school readiness”? The answer is often a checklist of skills every 4-year-old should master. Parents and caregivers may be familiar with focusing on academic skills like learning letter shapes and sounds, and motor skills like tying shoes. However, social and emotional growth and development play a key role in children’s success in school.

The good news is that through daily interactions with infants, toddlers and preschoolers, parents and caregivers help can help children develop the specific characteristics related to success in school:

1. *Confidence* – A sense of control and mastery of one’s body, behavior and world; the child’s sense that he is more likely than not to succeed at what he undertakes, and that adults will be helpful.
2. *Curiosity* – The sense that finding out about things is positive and leads to pleasure.
3. *Intentionality* – The wish and capacity to have an impact, and to act upon that with persistence. This is clearly related to a sense of competence, of being effective.
4. *Self-Control* – The ability to modulate and control one’s own actions in age-appropriate ways; a sense of inner control.
5. *Relatedness* – The ability to engage with others based on the sense of being understood by and understanding others.
6. *Capacity to Communicate* – The wish and ability to verbally exchange ideas, feelings and concepts with others. This is related to a sense of trust in others and of pleasure in engaging with others, including adults.
7. *Cooperativeness* – The ability to balance one’s own needs with those of others in a group activity.

These characteristics equip children with a “school literacy” more basic than knowledge of numbers and letters. It is the knowledge of *how to learn.*”

How we helped participants learn about and use other community resources

In alignment with the Search Institute’s developmental assets model, and using Asset Based Community Development principles, we established partner relationships with local agencies, organizations and associations to educate them about FFN issues, and to leverage their resources to connect with and serve FFN caregivers.

- City of North Bend Human Services Commission
- FACES East
- Habitat for Humanity
- King County Library System
- Riverview School District
- School Readiness Project (funded by United Way)
- Snoqualmie Valley Community Network

- Snoqualmie Valley Indoor Playground
- WIC (Women, Infants and Children)

At FFN caregiver meetings and in site visits around the community, we distributed resource information:

- King County Library Service programs: toddler and preschool storytimes, books to grow on, various STARS training seminars
- Snoqualmie Valley Community Network *Quick Referral Guide*
- Child Care Resources *Taking Care of Our Children* resource guide
- Snoqualmie Valley Indoor Playground – low-cost, parent run association

We also created a resource guide in the FFN section of our website at www.cssv.org.

How we helped caregivers become committed to providing good learning and growing experiences for children in their care and become more aware of the importance of what they do

Eduardo, age 3, was a frequent visitor to the child care room at a local gym. Staff members in this license-exempt facility (mostly teens) considered him disruptive, difficult to manage, and very challenging. Because of the language barrier and his behavior, he did not form close relationships with the adults, and did not play well with the children, who of course were different kids from day to day. Through coaching by our Project Coordinator, the child care



manager engaged the child’s mother in conversation, learning that they spent almost all their time at home, where Spanish was spoken exclusively. His mother was reluctant to enroll him in a preschool program, believing he didn’t need it at such a young age. As the child care room was Eduardo’s only regular social activity, he had little experience playing with children, and no other exposure to the English language. Through learning conversations, the child care provider and mother both came to understand that

Eduardo’s behavior stemmed from frustration at his inability to communicate, and lack of opportunities for social and emotional development. Having gained the mother’s trust, the manager gave her the Getting School Ready pamphlet in Spanish translation. Eduardo is now enrolled in a bilingual preschool program, and when he attends child care is “a different child”, happy and engaged in activities and relationships.

In terms of success with individual caregivers, establishing trusting relationships is the essential first step, requiring patience and a great deal of time. Asking families to share information about their child care needs and choices touches on their core values, as children are the heart of family life. Incorporating family support principles in FFN work is natural and essential, as we meet caregivers where they are in terms of knowledge and experience, and respect the child care choices made by families.

Approaching caregiver outreach and education from the framework of school readiness is effective and lessens the potential for a sense of intrusion into family life; school success is a topic of interest to all. This approach carries with it the added value of educating caregivers and families about

social and emotional aspects of school readiness, and giving them tools to promote all types of development within the context of daily life.

How we nurtured leadership qualities among our participants

When given the opportunity to share stories, ask questions, and suggest topics, caregivers feel respected and begin to take ownership of their own educational process. As the process of mutual learning takes shape, caregivers and parents are frequently surprised by their ability to teach and learn from others. Again, family support principles and practice guided our work.

How we have participated in evaluation efforts and what you learned through the evaluation process

- Worked with Organizational Research Services (ORS) during first 2 years to design and implement quantitative FFN provider survey, which was administered in pre and post tests. Learning:
 - Surveys were too long, especially for Latino families.
 - Survey process was intrusive and not well suited to support meetings.
 - Data gathered was not worth the effort.
 - Qualitative data collection more appropriate than quantitative.
 - Social change initiatives are “outside the box” for some evaluators.
 - Reporting honestly on both successes and challenges provided for rich learning opportunities.
- Worked with ORS during 3rd year to implement new, more qualitative evaluation procedure Learning:
 - Qualitative data collection is labor intensive.
 - If we fall behind in tracking this data, it is very hard to recapture.
 - Feedback from individual caregivers is the most difficult to procure, as the request to fill out a form can feel awkward in a support group setting.
 - The methods and forms used work very well to capture community awareness and partnership activities.
 - Monthly activity logs facilitated sharing of information at monthly grantee meetings, thus facilitating learning.

How we participated in and maintained partnership relationships with other organizations involved in family, friend and neighbor work

- Members of FFN Roundtable 2 years
- Members of FFN Network 3rd year
- Attendance at Coordinating Council and Learning Circles
- Presented FFN workshop at Family Support Washington with founding member of the African American Child Care Task Force on behalf of Child Care Resources
- Presented FFN workshop to Washington Child Care Coordinating Council in partnership with Child Care Resources
- Engaged in leadership role for Seattle/King County site with Sparking Connections, participating in conference calls, October meeting planning and presentations, writing and editing position papers.
- Established relationship with local Home Depot representatives and facilitated meeting between Human Resource Managers and Seattle/King County site representatives.

Additional Lessons Learned

We began this work by seeking out caregivers to determine their issues and needs. A year into the project, we engaged in a “Theory of Change” work session at one of the quarterly learning circles attended by grantees and funders. The need to raise FFN visibility and awareness in the community emerged as an area of primary importance, as work in the field led us to understand that FFN providers do not define themselves as such. From this point on, our project comprised dual goals: increasing caregiver capacity and fostering public awareness of the importance of FFN.

Establishing a regional identity as providers of information and support to FFN caregivers is a necessary factor in our attempt to achieve an increase in public awareness. With an established name and centralized contact point, FFN issues will be more likely to be included in sponsoring and participating in regional and statewide professional and learning events. The end result would hopefully be increased public awareness, increased visibility and credibility in the early childhood community, and increased opportunities for caregiver and parent education.

Creating partnerships and leveraging community resources is a highly effective method of increasing public awareness and reach individual caregivers. Valuable, often hidden resources exist throughout the community, such as Home Depot’s Kid’s Clubs, MOMs Clubs, PEPS, PTAs, etc. Natural leaders in various communities, when identified, can become natural connectors both to community groups and associations, and to individuals.

In building some community relationships, such as those with Community Networks or school districts, it is helpful to relate healthy child development to prevention efforts, as defined by Vygotsky’s social development theory of learning that “social interaction profoundly influences cognitive development.” His beliefs in the dependence of a life long process of development on social interaction, and that “social learning actually leads to cognitive development”¹ validate the need for support and intervention with FFN caregivers in all cultures and communities.

Personal experience in the field indicates that, in our community, FFN care is the most desired form of non-parental care, cutting across ethnic and socio-economic lines. Family members relocate, share housing, rearrange work schedules, work from home, anything they can in order to provide stable, loving care for their children. The “family” in Family, Friend & Neighbor really means extended family, as people with young children create their own family circle if their biological family members are not available for support.

In trying to define and somehow “quantify” FFN care and caregivers for evaluation and funding purposes, service providers face the difficult task of formalizing the informal. We should tread lightly in a system that is already working for many families and children, taking care to enhance and encourage, rather than to regulate or remedy.

¹ <http://chd.gse.gmu.edu/immersion/knowledgebase/theorists/constructivism/vygotsky.htm>
Riddle, Elizabeth M. *Lev Vygotsky’s Social Development Theory*, 3/99, page 1.

Chinese Information & Service Center FFN End-of-Year Report 2004

Selena had been looking for a playgroup for her 3 year old grandson Jason to join for a while, and was delighted to find out that the Chinese Information and Service Center offered one. It was a drive to get to the International District from Burien, where she lives, but she said she did not feel comfortable with the playgroups in her neighborhood that she had attended before. Jason's parents had enrolled him in a pre-school, but he had major separation anxiety issues and would not stop crying in school, so they had to take him out. The playgroup soon became a place where Jason grew comfortable coming to. It provided an opportunity for Jason to work on his separation issues as well as his socialization skills with other children.

When he first came to the playgroup he would not join in the activities, and would stand in a corner and cry. Nowadays, you can hear him running in the hallway to the Family Center. He smiles and plays with the other children, volunteers information, and takes part in all the activities. Separation anxiety issues are still there, but it is becoming easier for Selena to leave the room for a few minutes without Jason wailing. His fine motor skills are improving as he works with beads and cutting and pasting. Selena enjoys the camaraderie as she shares experiences with the other caregivers at the playgroup. For her it is an opportunity to get to know other caregivers with children around Jason's age. She is able to obtain information on parenting and child development, and is discovering different activities that she could replicate at home to entertain her grandchild. It was reassuring to know that the constructive and imaginative play; the cutting and pasting activities; the painting; the lacing and beading all serve to prepare Jason for school.



How and why we became interested in FFN care:

Traditionally, extended Asian families look after their own needs. In the United States, Chinese immigrants continue to carry on this tradition by relying on an informal network of families, friends and neighbors for help in child care. It has been the goal of CISC to provide these informal caregivers with the resources and guidance necessary for them to carry out their caregiving functions effectively. CISC recognizes the tremendous value these caregivers provide to the youth in the community; the continuity in language, culture and values that these caregivers offer is integral to the community's identity and cohesion. At the same time, there is also the need to provide these caregivers proven, effective methods of child care/parenting that is in keeping with the norm in the U.S.. Issues pertaining to discipline; cultural differences in parenting; literacy and school readiness – these are key issues to be addressed so that the children in the community will thrive under family, friend and neighbor care.

How we decided what approach to use and with whom:

The reason for starting a playgroup in the community for children between the ages of 3-5 was two-fold: one, to focus on school readiness and socialization for many children in our target group; two, to reach out to the caregivers and offer them parenting support as well as suggestions on how to engage the children in their care in meaningful activities.

CISC saw a need to offer some sort of a structured activity for the children in the community who were too young to attend kindergarten, but needed the exposure to activities that will help them prepare for school. School-aged children in the community were served by after-school programs, but there were no programs available for 3-5 year olds. Many of these children had in-home care, had limited opportunity to play with other children in their age groups, and did not attend pre-school.

It was hoped that the establishment of a regular, weekly playgroup would encourage caregivers to take the time to gather and meet other caregivers in the community, build a mutual support network, and learn effective methods of child-rearing. More importantly, CISC wanted to provide a safe, stimulating environment where young children could play, socialize, and be introduced to basic pre-school skills. The playgroup would serve as a place for the children and their caregivers to come to for meaningful activities that they could participate in together. We wanted the caregivers to learn how to “play” with the children under their care. .



“玩耍是件有趣的事。”
“Playing can be so much fun.”

It was decided from the beginning that the best way to achieve the feel of a pre-school was to set up the room we had available to resemble a typical pre-school/kindergarten classroom, with various play and activity centers that the children could rotate through. Walls were covered with posters of the alphabet, days of the week, and colorful piñatas were hung from the ceiling to make the space inviting and child-friendly. We made

use of colorful play mats to define each activity/play space, from a reading corner to the sandbox area to a free play area. All toys and supplies were kept in boxes and on shelves for easy accessibility.



How we reached and recruited participants:

Chinese flyers were distributed through Chinese churches, Chinese schools, community organizations, and Chinese restaurants and grocery stores. Press releases were sent regularly to local ethnic community newspapers to advertise the weekly playgroup and FFN caregiver workshop.

CISC staff members in different programs (Elderly Information & Assistance, Senior Center, International Family Center, and ESL & Naturalization Program) who are fully aware of the FFN Caregiver Program often assist with recruitment. They give out information to their clients who are FFN caregivers or families with young children. They also refer clients to playgroup and workshop.

How we incorporated research, cultural knowledge and other types of knowledge into delivering our services:

Culturally, the technique of playing to learn is a new concept for many Chinese caregivers, especially for grandparents. We overcame this barrier by highlighting in our outreach that the focus of play groups is to increase school readiness – a highly acceptable value for this generation.

Caregivers learned about language development and early reading during the workshop on developmental milestones. They also learned how to strengthen literacy and bilingual development through hands-on and practical techniques with integrated material from and CISC's collection of bilingual books for children, the Seattle Public Library's early literacy project and the "Parents as Teachers" literacy manual based on the Learning Basket Approach. In addition, based on the understanding that many parents do not have the opportunity or are not able to read complex research documents and popular literature and teaching curricula, our curriculum is designed to nurture literacy in the caregivers' native language while teaching essential information about child development and early learning.

How we kept participants interested and engaged in our service:

In order to encourage caregivers' participation, we made sure that the children always went home with a completed art or craft project. Free books and tiny keepsakes were sometimes given, and we also provided translated handouts on a regular basis to the attendees on topics such as early literacy, the importance of play and school readiness. We also constantly ask participants' feedback so the program can meet their needs.

We have observed that during both workshop and playgroup, as the caregivers became more comfortable with each other, they started to interact more with each other, and often shares child-rearing experiences. The participants were able to connect with each other and found that they have a great deal in common. Much of the Chinese population in King County is spread out geographically. As a result, grandparents and caregivers who are caring for children are often isolated, and may not know others outside the family who speak their dialect. The playgroup and workshop are the only opportunity for them to connect with others. In the context of the FFN project, these caregivers form relationships with each other, build their own communities, and form lasting relationships in which they continue to call each other for advice and support about raising children.

How we addressed health and safety issues:

In the workshop, we addressed basic safety issues, children first aid, emergency preparedness and procedures. We went through home safety checklist, food guide pyramid, steps for healthy brain development, growth and physical development checklist, guideline for car seat and buster seat, healthy snacks, and hazards at home. We gave out handouts in Chinese to participants of the workshop and playgroup. We also included these Chinese handouts in the "Ready, Set, Go" bags to be distributed to caregivers and parents.

How we addressed school readiness and school success (physical, emotional, cognitive and social):

A 15 minute "circle-time" during each playgroup session was provided, where basic pre-school concepts were introduced, such as letters and numbers. As almost all the children who attended the playgroup had little to no English in their home/daycare environment, we wanted to introduce them to simple words in English, as well as nursery rhymes and songs that many young children in America grew up reciting and singing. We focused on introducing and reinforcing one letter of the alphabet each week, and provided craft activities and stories around the letter. For example, when we introduced the letter "P", the children were introduced to words like pink, pig, pet, and the story of The Three Little Pigs (both in English and Chinese), and they

made a pig out of pink paper plates. The children were then free to choose various activities to occupy themselves with. The room was set up with a doll house, toy cars and trucks, manipulatives (beads, letters and numbers), a sand box, building blocks, a reading corner, a paint and Play Dough area, so the children were free to pick and choose their activity. We wanted to share with the caregivers the importance of meaningful play to help their children develop emotionally, physically, and cognitively. We compiled Chinese articles to address school readiness to be distributed to caregivers. Topics including: “Your Child Learns First from You”, “Your Child is Learning to Discover”, “Help Your Child to Learn Numbers and Patterns”, and “Help Your Child to Learn About People”. We also added one workshop to address math and science literacy and reading readiness.

The facilitator was also able to make more suggestions on how to help each individual child work on their skill sets: for example, showing the grandmother of one child who did not know how to use a pair of scissors that it was important to work on his fine motor skills so he would eventually be able to hold a pencil and learn to write. The child’s grandfather had not allowed the child to use scissors for fear that he would cut himself. After attending the playgroup for 2 months, both grandmother and child are now comfortable with using the scissors at craft time, with the grandmother openly encouraging the child to cut shapes out by himself.

How we helped participants learn about and use other community resources:

The caregivers were kept abreast of all the workshops and other support activities that were available to them through CISC. They had access to the staff at the International Family Center, as well as the activities that were offered at the center, including ESL, citizenship preparation, youth recreation and youth tutoring programs, health screening and education, family nights and cultural celebrations. Participants in the FFN project also connect with other community resources and networks through contact with CISC staff and the International District Family Center.

How we helped caregivers become committed to providing good learning and growing experiences for children in their care and become more aware of the importance of what they do:

At the playgroup sessions, the caregivers were able to see the facilitator model the interaction between adult and child. Varied activities were offered to help the children learn their letters and numbers, through counting rhymes, songs and games. The activities were fun, and made use of materials that the caregivers could easily obtain from home, such as egg cartons, scrap paper, household utensils. We also wanted to focus on exploring ways for the caregivers to help the children develop fine and gross motor skills. We noticed, for example, that most caregivers did not like the children getting messy. This meant that the children were not encouraged to engage in much sensory play, or be creative with art materials. We made it a point to show the caregivers that it was important for the children to get messy and explore with their senses. It was the process that was important, not the end result. As long as the children were supervised, they should be encouraged to cut and paste, paint, and create “projects”. Early literacy was also emphasized, and the caregivers were encouraged to read to the children more, and turn on the television less.

Feedback from the caregivers showed that the playgroup sessions and the workshops gave them ideas on more ways to play with the children in their care. They were particularly happy with the art and craft projects, and have become a lot more relaxed about the children getting sand in their shoes or paint in their hair. The playgroup provided an alternative to having the children sit in front of the television at home. The challenge was in attracting more participants to the playgroup.

How we nurtured leadership qualities among our participants:

We have used “We Make the Road by Walking” by Horton and Freire as our guiding principle in working with Chinese immigrant families. The phrase “we make the road by walking” is an adaptation of a proverb by the Spanish poet Antonio Machado, in which one line reads “you make the way as you go”. It is essential to start where people are. We believe that people can learn from each other. Sometimes one may not have the answer, but by respecting each other’s experiences and allowing people to share, we often can help people get the answers.

Culturally, Chinese are not very expressive in group. They are used to being lectured and not accustomed to active participation in the learning process.. We purposely designed the workshop and playgroup to be hands-on and encourage active participation. In the beginning, caregivers were reluctant to engage in activities and discussion. With a lot of support and modeling from the facilitator, caregivers became more comfortable in participation. In the end, they were able to share their knowledge and ideas with each others.

How we have participated in evaluation efforts and what we learned through the evaluation process:

In the previous years, we have conducted pre and post survey to evaluate participants’ ability to gain knowledge. From the feedback of the participants, they did not like the process. They felt like they were being tested. So we were able to work out a different feedback form with the technical assistance from ORS. We conduct one-on-one interviews to obtain feedback from the caregivers. This evaluation process makes participants feel less threatened and allows evaluation of the effects of formal training, facilitated groups discussions, modeling of techniques and informal interactions that occur during workshops and play groups, on participant knowledge as well as increases in their access to resources and decreases in isolation. Even though this process is more time consuming, because the process itself is culturally relevant, we are able to get more in-depth feedback from the caregivers so we can better meet their needs.

In addition to the caregivers’ feedback, we also complete monthly reports on successes and challenges. In the beginning, this process seemed to be an extra task added to our already busy work. Throughout the year, I learned to appreciate the process because in our busy schedule we tend to just DO our work, but this monthly process compels us to slow down and really evaluate what we have accomplished. Through the monthly reflection, we were able to better plan our work and meet the program goals.

How we participated in and maintained partnership relationships with other organizations involved in FFN work:

CISC staff has been active in sharing what is learned in the “For Love of Kids” project. Staff participates in monthly Family, Friends and Neighbors grantees’ networking meetings with other

providers, and in monthly tele-conferences and an annual national conference of the Sparking Connections national initiative sponsored by the Families and Work Institute.

In addition, project progress and lessons are shared on an ongoing basis with members of other coalitions with which International District Family Center staff are involved, such as the Refugee and Immigrant Parent Advocacy Network.

CISC also collaborates with community organizations including Tzu-Chi Foundation, Taiwanese Culture and Education Foundation, to promote community awareness in understanding the important role that FFN caregivers play in providing the children in their care the learning and growing experiences that will ensure the children's future success in school.

Refugee Women's Alliance 2004 Report for FFN Care Project

One particular story that warms our hearts and further strengthens our passion and dedication to continue to promote such projects as FFN to our clients is the story of Miss. S. Miss S. is a single Vietnamese mother with two children, a bright girl and an active autistic boy. Although Miss S. does not have any English skills, lacks family support, and is overwhelmed with caring for her two children, she never complains. She constantly shares with her Family Advocate that although life is tough, she feels that she is very blessed to have two beautiful children and ReWA as her "second home." She expresses that she feels empowered through the different classes that she participates in, such as the Parenting class and FFN workshops. Through these classes, she has become more confident in herself and chose to become her children's advocate. Prior to these classes, she would passively participate in her children's academics and would not dare to question the school's authority even when she had concerns. However, after attending the FFN workshops she learned about the importance of parental support and guidance in healthy development of children. Therefore, she currently is actively participating in her children's IEP meetings and voices her wishes on how the school can help her children with their academic progress. Moreover, Miss S. shares the information she obtained from her own experiences in working with different service providers such as teachers, doctors, and social workers, with her friends and neighbors. Miss S. states that she wants to empower other women and help them to believe in themselves, in the same way that she feels empowered by participating in ReWA's educational projects.

What Is The Purpose Of Having Family, Friend and Neighbor Care Project At ReWA?



The refugee and immigrant families that come to the United States usually have more than one child. In addition, the extended family plays a crucial role in childrearing, regardless of the number of children in the family. This is why the family, friend and neighbor caregivers are so important. In order for parents to work, attend school, learn English or engage in a job search, they rely on the support of family members as well as their friends and neighbors with whom they have a trusting relationship. In order for these caregivers to succeed in rearing emotionally, cognitively, socially and physically healthy children, they need the latest information on child development and best practices on a variety of issues pertaining to child rearing. At ReWA, information and support is provided to the caregivers as well as the parents that use these caregivers. We regularly approach these caregivers, inviting them to our workshops to provide support and information needed to help children reach their full developmental potential. ReWA has been aware of the need for this type of support to the individuals charged with the care of children, and the funding from the Opportunity Fund for supporting FFN care provided ReWA with an opportunity to fill this vital need in our community.

The FFN Project enables ReWA to move barriers facing clients who are in need of quality childcare. Parents are more willing to attend citizenship classes, ESL classes, and vocational training workshops provided by ReWA when they know that their children are being properly

cared for at home. The caregiver's workshops support families that cannot afford childcare or for cultural and/or religious reasons are reluctant to place their children in licensed care facility.

ReWA strongly believes in empowerment through education. The clients at ReWA attending the FFN workshops include parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, family friends as well as older siblings. All participants report great benefits from FFN workshops and many of them come with children that they are caring for to get information and attend classes. All participants receive information in their native language and are encouraged to share their knowledge with others in the community.

By supporting families in rearing healthy children and expanding the circle of knowledge about child development ReWA, through the FFN Project, has been able to encourage parents and caregivers to become informed and participating partners in healthy development of children.



How The Project Began

ReWA designed and produced a flyer in different languages and involved other ReWA programs to recruit for the FFN Project. In addition, ReWA's Family Advocates conducted outreach to the community and explained the project to the interested individuals. We also did a presentation to service providers and businesses in the refugee and immigrant communities. We created a handbook for the participants with five sections including the program goals and key components. The purpose of this handbook was to provide a complete summary of the workshops, informing clients in advance of topic areas. The handbook was constructed to allow note-taking directly into the handbook. The handbook used simple English to reduce literacy issues and improve clients' ability to read and understand the key components of the workshops.

The Refugee Women's Alliance staff together with the University of Washington Nursing students and Seattle University students designed the handbook with topics covering:

- 1. Raising children to become bicultural.**
- 2. CPR and safety issues.**
- 3. Nutrition.**
- 4. Child Development and School readiness.**
- 5. Discipline and guidance.**

ReWA presented all these topics in a culturally appropriate way to the refugee and immigrant community participants. Workshops always included interpreters as well as Q&A time to ensure all participants understood the information. Workshops concentrated on how to prepare children for school and on developmental issues with regard to children from birth to 5 years old. The goal was for participants to gain knowledge and experience with accessing services, improving communication, gaining knowledge about child development, and getting quality services for children.

The first workshop

Our 1st workshop was conducted at the ReWA main office with 20 students from Vietnam, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Cambodia and China. Family Advocates representing each language were present. For each workshop, we recruited a presenter or guest speaker. We provided fun activities including class time to share stories. Many of the participants were parents who used FFN caregivers or occasionally provided FFN care. Grandparents also attended the class to obtain information. Family Advocates conducted home visits and provided information to participants that were unable to come to the workshop. All this information was presented in a culturally appropriate way, respecting the individual culture of each participant.

One of the primary outcomes of the workshops, particularly during our first workshop, was to provide the participants the information needed to increase their knowledge about the caregivers' role in healthy child development and positive self –esteem. Information about other community resources, including services available at ReWA were also provided.

The second workshop

We did our 2nd workshop off-site in south Seattle in conjunction with our Sea-Tac office. We did outreach to homebound families that use FFN caregivers, and we arranged to meet in an apartment complex where many refugee and immigrant families reside.

The workshop was very successful because we provided the materials the families need including information regarding school readiness, child development, and home safety for children and others. While the participants in this workshop were from many different countries, most of them were from West Africa and East Africa, with a few of them from other countries. Twenty-three clients completed the workshops; all of them were women with more than one child, who were also caregivers. The FFN Caregiver project impacts the participants in our programs both as parents and as caregivers, making it a vital tool in helping the families.

Community awareness that we did about the FFN program

We conducted outreach through the places listed below, and provided information to other agencies and disseminated information about community resources to our participants.

- **Community based organizations**
- **Schools**
- **Small businesses in the community**
- **Community gatherings / events**
- **Parents and caregivers**
- **Other Health and Human service providers in the surrounding community**
- **Medical centers and Public Health of King County**
- **Seattle Public Library**

The outreach efforts were very successful especially when our Family Advocates were involved and the program explanations could be provided in native languages and we could answer questions directly.

Outreach to the Community During the month of January, we started using flyers and encouraged a word of mouth campaign within the communities we serve. We engaged all the

family advocates at ReWA to talk with potential participants about the family, friend and neighbor care project.

During the month of February, we did a presentation to twenty parents at Whitworth elementary school in the Seattle school district about the family, friend and neighbor care project for their parent night.

During the month of March, we visited local radio stations that broadcast in different languages and went out in the community to do presentations. This allowed us to reach over 1500 listeners. In these presentations and during the radio broadcasts, we realized that many families who relied on the extended family to care for their children were welcoming of new information in regards to child development.

During the month of April, we did a presentation to service providers at a cultural awareness workshop at Rainier Community Center. There were about 100 to 120 participants at this presentation where we passed out our flyer and made many personal contacts directly with potential participants.

During the month of May, we did some in-house promotion. We talked to our childcare parents as well as our ESL students. The staff of the FFN Caregivers project at ReWA gave presentations and informed other ReWA staff about FFN, and provided information and times of the workshops at ReWA.

In June, we did a presentation at an Ethiopian gathering that was at the Seattle Seahawks stadium during a soccer game. Our Family Advocates were able to target and talk to over 25 families about the FFN Caregivers project.

In July, we did a presentation in south Seattle, at the Windsor heights apartment complex. During this outreach event we talked with about 30-50 families and most of these residents signed up for the FFN Caregiver workshop. We started a workshop in August and twenty three student completed the caregiver workshop successfully. Being able to bring the workshops to South King County enabled ReWA to reach out to more families who otherwise would not have had access to services due to transportation barriers.

In August we did a presentation at the African United Day. The Family Advocates outreached to approximately 100 families.

During the month of September, we passed out school materials to families and talked to them about school readiness. We shared information about proper supplies and the importance of proper supplies in ensuring academic success. We informed parents and caregivers about the list of school supplies being available at schools and provided them with additional community resources so that they could be sure their child had needed supplies. Additionally, ReWA provided parents with a list of programs that offered free supplies for children.

In October, we did a presentation at a multicultural gathering that takes place once a year for families that have children with special needs. We talked with caregivers and parents and gave out information. We also did a presentation to the Refugee Immigrant Parent Advocacy Network. This is a networking group of 16 different communities that are working on school issues within the Seattle school district.

In November, we had our peer educators workshop. Participants were provided with special Thanksgiving gifts .We talked to the families that we have helped with the FFN caregivers' project and made sure they knew that caregivers or parents could come back to ReWA if they needed any additional help or support.

ReWA's current services and how they are connected to FFN project

The Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) was founded in 1985 by an informal group of refugee and immigrant women to support newly arrived women and their families. Since that time, ReWA has provided high quality, culturally responsive services to refugee and immigrant families in the King County. As a multi-service provider, ReWA's programs are designed to address the intergenerational needs of the families we serve. Many of the refugee and immigrant parents that we serve rely on extended family to care for their children. Although some families do not have extended family members, they use someone they know in the community, which can be a neighbor or friend. Most of ReWA's programs specifically support parents and caregivers to respond to the physical, emotional, cognitive and social needs of the children in their care. We have used these programs to educate our families about the Family, Friend and Neighbor care project:

1. Youth Program:

There are children that are being taken care of by older siblings at home after school, before school and on weekends. Therefore, school age children need to get information and support in order for them to be a caregiver. The Family Advocates talked to participants in our Youth Program. They were encouraged to bring the school age children they are caring for to the Youth Program, and we modeled appropriate activities and supervision techniques. Making this service accessible to this group gives them skills not only as caregivers, but also adds to their ability to get help and care for themselves.

2. Parenting Program:

The ReWA parenting education program gives support and information on raising children in the United States. It also focuses on healthy relationships in the family so that the children will have successful role models and greater connection to their own cultural identity. This works hand in hand with the FFN caregiver program to make parents better role models and caregivers.

3. Family Literacy Program:

This program offers education to children, their parents and caregivers to learn and build communication across the generations. Adult learners gain vital literacy and technology skills, share their skills and interests with their children and become active participants in their children's education. This program helps the Family, Friend and Neighbor care program by providing a play group for parents and caregivers. Giving them projects to do together so that they can learn from each other, deepen relationships and enhance communication.

4. Early Childhood Education Program:

This program at ReWA offers infants, toddlers and preschoolers a rich and sensitive curriculum that fosters learning and enables each child to explore, gain skills and build competencies. The Family, Friend and Neighbor care project provides vital information to

the parents who have children enrolled in our childcare facility. Information about school readiness, as well as native language classes to the children is provided.

5. Developmental Disabilities Program:

This program at ReWA helps families that have children with special needs. The families who have children with developmental disabilities face incredible emotional and practical challenges. An important way to help these families is through the Family, Friend and Neighbor care project, providing crucial support and giving information to the parent and the caregivers about respite care, Medicaid, personal care, and special education programs at public schools. The FFN project staff communicates with families one on one to provide the services needed for these families and is responsive to the different needs that each of these families presents.

The services at ReWA are very comprehensive. Caregivers are encouraged to participate in these programs, and can enhance their caregiving skills through our childcare training program. Both parent and caregiver can also access the network of other free, bilingual/bicultural services offered at ReWA including family support and advocacy, ESL classes, tutoring, employment training and job placement, citizenship classes, youth support services, domestic violence, mental health services, health education for pregnant women, and information and referral services.

What we have learned about providing FFN services at ReWA



The FFN Project has reaffirmed our belief in the importance of education and empowerment. ReWA recognizes that many of our clients have multiple needs for a range of comprehensive services. War, low standards of living, displacement and trauma interrupted the educational and social processes for many families. Once they arrive in the U.S., limited social and economic resources, compounded by language barriers, often mean that these families live below the poverty line and have greater difficulty accessing support services. While ReWA recognizes the needs of our clients, we also value the great strength that refugees and immigrants bring to their new homeland. We encounter parents who are deeply committed to helping their children and who are concerned about how their children succeed in school, in work and in life. During a recent needs assessment, for example, parents expressed their desire for the schools to know how much they care for their children, and for opportunities to develop the skills that will allow them to become strong advocates for their children's education. Families benefit when they are provided with culturally appropriate, linguistically accessible resources that assist them to raise successful and emotionally healthy children. Peer education has become one of the tenets of ReWA's educational programs, empowering refugee and immigrants to become leaders and trusted advocates of their own education and education of their children. During this project, participants shared their beliefs and childrearing practices with the ReWA staff, which will be incorporated into our curricula.

Why do we deliver these services to our families/caregivers

ReWA recognizes that there is a need for caregivers to get education and information on child development and school readiness as well as other information on how to help a child be bilingual and bicultural. Many of the families we see rely on family, friends and neighbors to care for their children while they work long hours. Many of these caregivers are elders with little or no formal education, and hence limited exposure to child development research and best practices. Many elder caregivers follow traditional child rearing approaches that do not emphasize a child's ability to learn and change over time. ReWA can assist refugee and immigrant caregivers who are isolated by language, cultural and transportation barriers to become more knowledgeable about developmental approaches.

Second, ReWA understands the value of delivering this service because of the empowering outcomes of education. The information provided to our participants is respectful and honoring of their cultural beliefs and child-rearing practices and therefore, we partner with parents and caregivers to blend the best practices from their own cultural traditions with the new techniques and developmental approaches.

Finally, ReWA believes that this project is highly effective and will have direct impact on the children of the families we serve. Children benefit when parents become leaders of their education, and when they receive effective guidance, stimulation and care. The FFN project provides opportunities for parents who are using the FFN care model to learn best practices by removing language and cultural barriers and by providing a framework for generating an empowering, quality environment that is secure, enriching and culturally responsive for the families involved.



Peer Educators

The goals regarding our peer educators is to generate successful role models to improve the refugee and immigrant families knowledge in peer support, develop advocacy skills, group facilitation styles and provide culturally sensitive trusted community advocates. The peer educators play supportive roles to other community members and share their knowledge with other interested individuals. Additionally, they act as a bridge between the community and the services in the community since they speak the same languages and share the same cultural background. The Peer educators, also referred to as **trusted community advocates**, have very close relationship with all the family, friends and neighbor caregivers in their communities and are able to disseminate valuable information on the purpose of the project and issues pertaining to child development and the role of caregivers in the child's development process.

What will be covered in the workshop for peer educators?

In the five sessions offered to the peer educators, we covered all the topics listed below and provided them with ReWA's mission and vision statements. Moreover, we translated materials in various languages, and provided access to ReWA's services making sure they had the phone number of the program coordinator for family, friends and neighbors care program. The topics covered in the workshop were:

1st Session - Orientation

- Introductions
- ReWA's mission and visions statements
- Information regarding roles and responsibilities of peer educators
- Confidentiality issues
- Agreement of participation

2nd Session - Skills Development

- Listening /communication skills
- Outreach skills
- Home visit skills
- Advocacy skills
- How and where to give information
- Diverse community communication skills

3rd Session - Cultural Competency Training

- What is culture
- Bicultural facilitation skills
- Bicultural presentation skills
- Bicultural communication skills
- Cultural sensitivity exercises

4th Session - Review Basics of Care giving

- Child development and our role in helping
- School readiness
- Safety and nutrition

5th Session - Group Presentations

- Share skills and knowledge
- Share how you will do our presentations
- Share your communication skills
- Share success stories
- Graduation and celebration

Each peer educator completed these workshops before they networked with communities. In each workshop we provided experiential role-playing as well as a demonstration at the end of the day so that the peer educators became comfortable with outreach and educating the community with regard to the Family, Friends and Neighbor care project. ReWA utilized the peer educators to outreach to the homebound families to ensure equal access to information.

Peer Educator/Trusted Community Advocate responsibilities

Each of these roles requires the person to be a coach and role model to other community members. Family, Friend and Neighbor caregivers participate in support groups that are respectful of the relationship between them. One of their main responsibilities is to help pass out our 'Ready, Set, Go bags' to the community. The Peer Educators know who these people are in the community, and they also speak the same language so they can explain the materials and

their usage in a manner that the caregiver understands. The Peer Educators are volunteering most of their time to do this job, as we only give them a one-time stipend of a \$20 gift card for Safeway store to show our appreciation. The peer educators are also the future community connection for the FFN program and a valuable source of information. ReWA has traditionally invested in the peer educators' education and has been a pioneer in developing the peer educators' model. ReWA encourages individuals to become a resource to community members by giving out information and to return to ReWA with community feedback. Peer Educators meet with ReWA's FFN program coordinator once a month to update each other regarding what is new and what we can do together to solve problems and address new and emerging issues. The FFN program staff also calls or has one-on-one meetings with the peer educators as needed.

Evaluation and successes of this project

We administered a pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire to each participant in this program. We also used a client evaluation tool at the end of each workshop. The questionnaires had a number of things on them designed to assess the participants' knowledge and how much they improved after participating in the workshops. The evaluation we used is in very simple English to ensure comprehension, and caregivers who needed it received assistance in translation. Most participants reported that the favorite part of the workshops was the information regarding child development and school readiness, as well as the nutrition and safety information. The feedback from participants enable us to add or delete topics that would keep the participants interested and engaged in the workshops.

Principles of Family Support Practice

- 1.** Staff and families work together in relationships based on equality and respect.
- 2.** Staff enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members--adults, youth, and children.
- 3.** Families are resources to their own members, to other families, to programs, and to communities.
- 4.** Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society.
- 5.** Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process.
- 6.** Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.
- 7.** Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development.
- 8.** Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.
- 9.** Principles of family support are modeled in all program activities, including planning, governance, and administration.