

**WGCA Final Report**  
**Submitted by Healthy Families Alexandria**  
**Northern Virginia Family Service**  
**July 31, 2008**

The WGCA grant provides support to ten families enrolled in the Healthy Families Alexandria Program. One family (#5) was closed at the beginning of June because the mother's work and school schedule did not allow time for home visits. Additional information on all the families can be found in earlier reports.

We are very grateful to our liaisons, Jane Knops and Tracy Nickelsburg, for all their many contributions to Healthy Families Alexandria during the past year. Both Jane and Tracy serve on the Healthy Families Alexandria Resource Development Committee (RDC) and Tracy serves as the RDC secretary. They have brought wonderful energy and new ideas to the work of the committee. As noted below, Tracy hosted a very successful WGCA Kids Event at her home to benefit the families in the program. She also arranged for a meeting with Councilman Justin Wilson and introduced Christine Brown, our new WGCA liaison, to Healthy Families. Jane wrote a successful grant proposal to the Rotary Club of Alexandria; researched foundations and identified 41 foundations that might be interested in supporting Healthy Families; assisted with the Kids Event; researched statistics for another grant proposal; and traveled to Hampton to learn more about their program (see below). This is only a partial list of their many contributions.

### **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR**

**Recognition and Growth Opportunity for Healthy Families Alexandria:** Healthy Families Virginia and the Virginia Department of Social Services selected Alexandria as one of two sites to propose to the next General Assembly for investment in "going to scale" by serving at least 75% of all eligible families. There are 38 Healthy Families sites in Virginia. Alexandria was chosen because of its strong local support, strong outcomes and its stability. The four finalists were invited to Richmond to make a presentation about their respective programs. The Alexandria presentation was made by Mary Agee, President of Northern Virginia Family Service; Carol Freeman, Program Manager; Carol Farrell, Director of the City of Alexandria's Office of Early Childhood; and Rodger Digilio, chair of the major donor committee of the Healthy Families Alexandria Resource Development Committee. Carol Farrell, who asked NVFS to begin a Healthy Families program in Alexandria in 1992, Mary Agee and Rodger Digilio have all been involved with the program since its inception.

Initially, 20 possible sites were identified. The list was narrowed down to 10 and then to 5 based on the following criteria (one of the 5 sites withdrew from the process):

- Small number of localities

- Legislative influence (based primarily on legislators from that community who serve on Senate Finance, House Appropriations, or are likely conferees)
- Major media market proximity
- Credentialing status up to date
- Demographics
- Ability to track outcomes and manage data systems over time
- Stability (host agency for 2 years or more, program manager for 2 years or more, minimal staff turnover in last year)
- Access to target population (reaching 75% of target population, acceptance of home visiting and assessment at least 80%, stable Memorandum of Understanding)
- Twenty five percent of the program's support coming from the locality.

**Trip to Hampton, Virginia.** On May 19, 2008, Nina Randolph, chair of the Healthy Families Alexandria Resource Development Committee; Jane Knops, liaison with the WGCA and RDC member; and Program Manager Carol Freeman traveled to Hampton, Va. to meet with Debbie Russell, Prevention Program Administrator, and Allison Nelson, Resource and Communication Manager of the Hampton Healthy Families Partnership. The goal of the trip was to learn more about the Partnership, which provides comprehensive services to all parents, has strong local support and has “gone to scale”. The Partnership's program offers a comprehensive array of services including home visitation, parenting classes, newsletters, library resource centers and a variety of other programs.

**WGCA Kids Event, April 11, 2008:** WGCA member and Healthy Families liaison Tracy Nickelsburg hosted a Kids Volunteer Event at her home to benefit Healthy Families. Children decorated gift bags that were stuffed with toys and books donated by parents. The goal was to decorate 40 gift bags; at the end of the day, more than 100 gift bags were made. The gift bags will be given to children on special events (birth of a baby, birthdays).

**Metrostage Fundraiser, April 28, 2008.** This year's Metrostage fundraiser was highly successful, with approximately 100 new and old supporters enjoying an evening of good food, good company and jazz. Students from St. Stephens/St. Agnes were the featured performers, courtesy of WGCA member Jane Knops.

**Annual Picnic:** Healthy Families Alexandria hosted its annual picnic for families on June 18, 2008 at Fort Ward Park. NACHRI generously purchased all the food (valued at more than \$1,000) and NACHRI volunteers did all the shopping, good preparation and grilling. Activities included face painting; bubbles; balls; and photos of the children. Eleven families graduated from the program and were awarded graduation certificates and gifts for the children.

**Family and Children's Trust Fund Award:** Healthy Families Alexandria and Arlington received an award from the Family and Children's Trust Fund for "innovative community collaboration to prevent family violence in the Commonwealth of Virginia". Program Manager Carol Freeman traveled to Richmond on June 25, 2008 to accept the award on behalf of Northern Virginia Family Service.

**Presentation to St. Anthony's Preschool:** Christine Brown, WGCA member and Healthy Families liaison, invited Program Manager Carol Freeman to make a presentation to parents and the director of St. Anthony's Preschool in Old Town. The preschool will be giving a full scholarship to a four year old for the 2008-2009 academic year and invited Healthy Families Alexandria to submit the names of possible candidates. One Healthy Families family has applied for the scholarship and is awaiting notification. This is an exciting partnership between Healthy Families and St. Anthony's.

**Meeting with Councilman Justin Wilson:** WGCA liaisons Tracy Nickelsburg and Jane Knops and program manager Carol Freeman met with Justin Wilson on May 19<sup>th</sup> to inform him about the Healthy Families Program.

**Funding Status, 2009:** The FY 2009 budget is \$838,816. Funding sources include: Virginia General Assembly; City of Alexandria Children's Fund; Women's Giving Circle of Alexandria; Freddie Mac Foundation; Rotary Club of Alexandria; William D. Euille Foundation; Alexandria Community Policy and Management Team; Katharine Maddux Memorial Mental Health Foundation; and private contributions. To date, \$813,173 has been committed, not including the funds raised each year by the Resource Development Committee, which will make up the difference.

## **REPORT ON FAMILIES**

### **FAMILY #1**

#### **# of home visits: 11**

**Referrals:** Preschools, including Head Start, ALIVE Child Development Center, and Child and Family Network Centers; ALIVE Family Emergency Program (food); Reading Connection; Hispanic Committee; ChildFind; Medicaid (for diapers); Open Minds (for mental health counseling); Financial Aid program through INOVA Hospital; Inova Financial Aid Program to help pay for expensive emergency room bill.

**Level 2:** Normally this family would be on level 3, but has been maintained on level 2 because the family has had many crises during the past year.

The twins are now 3 ½ years old. Mom has been fairly consistent with home visits, although she wasn't available for one month. Mom has trouble with engaging with non-family members and she doesn't answer her phone. However, she likes the home visits.

The twins are still not potty trained, largely because the mom works fulltime and the babysitter isn't interested in potty training them. Toilet training is a priority so that children can go to preschool. The FSW is helping the mom learn to set limits with the children. The family was referred to counseling services. The FSW reminded the mom to get the twins their 3-year checkup (which she did). She is working with mom to help her children express themselves. The FSW brought art activities to support fine motor skills, as well as reading to promote language skills. The family is enrolled in the Reading Connection program and the family receives 2 books each month. The children are slightly behind developmentally, but not enough behind to qualify for ChildFind. The 36-month ASQ was done at the end of January and it was not in range. In March, the ChildFind specialist observed the children but did not find them eligible for special services. The 42-month ASQ is due in July.

**Topics discussed:** preschool; social emotional development; social issues; ChildFind; pretend play; behavior issues; shapes and colors; puzzles; family issues; potty training and preschool; health questionnaire; abuse; how to help your child express himself; doctor's visits; colors

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## **FAMILY #2**

### **# of home visits:11**

**Level 2:** Will soon be moved to Level 3.

Baby recently turned 3, and mom also has a 7-month old baby.

**Referrals:** Various preschools including Head Start. Mom didn't make the deadline. The FSW then helped mom fill out an application to ALIVE Child Development Center. Child and Family Network Centers.

Both parents are very engaged in home visits. The FSW has been working with the mom on positive discipline and showed the parents the DVD on positive discipline. The mom reports that the baby is responding better to her because she is speaking to him in a calmer tone. Activities include puzzles and pretend play to promote intellectual development. The mom's goal is to go to school and learn English when the baby goes to preschool. The FSW gave her information on local English classes, including the program at Christ Church. The younger child's 4-month ASQ was in range as well as the target child's 36-month ASQ. This mom is relatively independent. The family participates in Reading Connection program.

**Topics Discussed:** Ages and Stages Questionnaire; language development; fine motor skills; toys for 2 year olds; discipline; Head Start; pretend play; positive discipline; health coverage; eating habits; self esteem; health questionnaire; preschool; finances;

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## **FAMILY #3**

**# of home visits: 15**

**Level 2**

**Referrals:** Embassy; Multicultural Center

The baby is now 13 months old. This family moved from a level 1 to a Level 2 in April. The 8-month and 12-month ASQ were both within range. Mom does all of the follow-up activities with the baby after home visits. The FSW does a lot of language activities with the mom. The baby loves and responds to music.

**Topics Discussed:** stranger anxiety; attachment; how emotions develop; changing positions; cruising; safety proofing for walking; transition from crawling to walking; parent's role; toys for learning; small muscle development; feeding skills; self-help skills; temperament; curiosity; discipline; receptive language; encouraging interest in books; safety for toddlers; child care check-up; large muscle development; social games; negativism; language development and autonomy.

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**FAMILY #4a**

**# of home visits:10**

**Referrals:** None

**Level 2:** Child is now 14 months old.

The dad was present for home visits during the first 2 months of the reporting period. Both mom and dad work and trade off with childcare. The family has had numerous problems with Medicaid and the FSW has helped the mom make calls to the Medicaid office. The FSW has been supporting mom with helping her baby learn to walk and ensuring that everything within the child's reach is safe. The dad's goal is to get his driver's license. The FSW is helping the parents develop similar rules for the baby. The FSW took videos of the baby when she was 7 months old (with the Dad) and when she was 14 months old (with the mom). She recently showed both videos to the parents so they could see the changes in their child's growth as well as their different parenting styles. The 12-month ASQ was in range. The family is involved with Reading Connection. The FSW is beginning to work on fine motor skills (shape sorter).

**Topics discussed:** Separation anxiety; home safety; ideas for toys; positive discipline; motor skills; baby's abilities; temperament; parent roles; health; reading; fine motor skills.

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**FAMILY #5:**

**# of home visits: 2**

**Level:** XA (Creative Outreach)

**Referrals:** Head Start

At the last home visit in February, the baby was 29 months old. It became increasingly difficult for the FSW to schedule a home visit with this mom because she was attending school both during the day and the evening so she could graduate from high school. The mom was also applying to colleges. We kept this case open because the mom indicated that she wanted to continue with home visits. However, when the FSW would go to the home for the scheduled home visit, the mom wouldn't be there. Her case was closed as of June 1.

**Topics discussed:** matching by shape; eye hand coordination; beginning to count; gender awareness; matching, sorting and classifying; color and size.

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## **FAMILY #6**

**# of home visits: 6**

**Level 3**

**Referrals:** Head Start

The baby is now 35 months old. The mom does all the activities that the FSW brings with her on home visits with all her three children. Now that the oldest child is 3 years old, one of the mom's goal is to enroll him in a preschool program (Network or Head Start). The mom is planning to return to school to get her GED.

**Topics Discussed:** Discipline; techniques for enforcing limits; problem solving; preschool registration; toilet training; temperament at two; self esteem; cooking; adjusting to a sibling; looking for a preschool

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## **FAMILY #7**

**# of home visits: 13**

**Level 2**

**Referrals:** HF Alexandria Annual Picnic; Social Service for Child Care; Playgroup; ALIVE! for food.

This family moved from level 1 to level 2 during the reporting period. The baby is now 13 months old. The 8-month ASQ and ASQ-SE showed that the baby was in range for both assessments. This mom is working and she is often late for home visits – the FSW sometimes has to wait for 20 minutes. The mom doesn't have a cell phone which complicates communication. The current focus of home visits is on language

development. The FSW is encouraging the mom to read to the baby, which she is doing. The father, who is also working, is very involved with the home visits.

**Topics Discussed:** Learning to crawl; curiosity; safety proofing; babbling; language development; cause and effect experimentation; creeping and crawling; stranger anxiety; attachment; how emotions develop; brain and muscle development; progression to walking; fine motor development; temperament; feeding skills; discipline; safety for toddlers; interest in books; problem solving; first words.

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## **FAMILY #8**

**# of home visits: 10**

**Level 3**

**Referrals:** Reading Connection; Network Preschool; Head Start

The baby is now 36 months old. The 33-month and 36-month ASQs showed that the child is in range in all areas. The mom is engaged in her child's development and activities. She reads to her child both in English and Spanish. The child chooses the book he wants to read, and then repeats the words after his mother. The mom donated some baby clothes and toys to the Healthy Families program to benefit other families.

**Topics Discussed:** toilet training; reading to baby; healthy teeth; reinforcing positive self-esteem; temperament and temperament traits; music.

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## **FAMILY #9**

**# of home visits: 11**

**Level 2**

**Referrals:** Playgroup; Social Services (for Medicaid); Casey Clinic; Annual Healthy Families Picnic (June 18).

The baby is now 24 months old. The 24-month ASQ found the child to be in range. The mother brought the baby to the doctor who told the mom that the baby has language delays. He sent the mom to another doctor in the Health Department for more intensive tests – and the baby was found to be OK. The mom is expecting another baby this summer. The FSW is working with the mom on discipline. The FSW is also talking with the father about the impact of watching adult action films with his child. The family has begun reading more to the child. The father recently told the FSW that they are going to begin early with routines with the new baby. The family is planning to enroll their child in preschool when he turns 3. Both parents are home for home visits and the father participates actively in home visits.

**Topics Discussed:** Language development; listening; importance of music; music and brain development; saying and combining words; general development; parent's role; intellectual development; problem solving and puzzles; making transitions; nutrition; fine motor development; child care considerations; problem solving; beginning conversation skills; social and emotional development; health and safety for toddlers.

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## **FAMILY #10**

**# of home visits: 9**

**Level 2**

**Referrals: WIC**

The baby is 13 months old. The family is now Level 2 because the mom did not want more frequent home visits. The mom is welcoming to the FSW and engages in the home visit. She is very attentive to her baby during home visits and is willing to try new ideas presented to her. She follows through on the goals she sets for herself and her baby.

The baby did well on the 8-month ASQ and ASQ-SE. On the 12-month ASQ, the baby had low scores in problem solving and fine motor skills. The FSW plans to talk to mom and urge her to have the baby assessed by PIE (Parent Infant Education). The FSW has been encouraging the mom to get down on the floor and play with her baby, although this is uncomfortable for the mom. The baby has recently shown great improvement in gross motor and has just begun to pull up consistently (probably because he wasn't getting the opportunity to do it). The mom is very overprotective. Mom is continuing to receive mental health services for anxiety.

**Topics Discussed:** Babbling; feeding issues; creeping & crawling; experimenting with cause and effect; transition from crawling; safety proofing for walking; toys for learning; fine motor skills and development; encouraging talking.