

AUGUST Newsletter



SELF, CCP Bring Play to 28th Street

Since COVID hasn't allowed children in ESD 112's school-age child care center to take field trips this summer, field trips have come to them. Some have been organized sports, but one field trip was free-range play!

Twice, SELF joined forces with Columbia Play Project to set up a Party in the Park at the 28th St. Center in the old Ogden Elementary School. CPP provided the toys, from Stomp Rockets to giant Connect Four to sack racing, sidewalk chalk, jump roping and parachute fun. Art and giant bubbles were big hits with the kids.

While playing with the children, SELF board members and volunteers got a close-up look at the child care center for which SELF manages the human resources.

Columbia Play Project is a nonprofit dedicated to bringing hands-on play experiences to children and families in Clark County. Their eventual goal is a brick-and-mortar children's museum. Learn more at columbiaplayproject.org.

Thank you,

Debbie Ham
Executive Director

Project Aims to Expand Child Care in Central Vancouver

Imagine trying to navigate the government systems that lead to a child care license if English is not your first language, or not your language at all. Imagine trying to work through the system if your lived experiences include trauma caused by government systems.

These are just some of the barriers a group of Spanish-speaking women in Central Vancouver are learning to overcome through the Southwest Washington Child Care Partnership. It was initially funded by a grant to SELF from the state Department of Commerce, developed by SELF, Vancouver Public Schools and ESD 112. Its premise and process is so promising, the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington and the Lynch Fund agreed to continue funding it after the grant ran out.

The partnership envisioned a model based on promising national models that could address the child care crisis in central Vancouver.

Its impact could be huge in the area served by Roosevelt, Washington and Harney elementary schools. If each of the original 15 participants becomes a licensed child care provider, they could eventually add from 108 up to 180 slots of bilingual, bicultural child care in that area. And SWCCP could become a model program to be replicated elsewhere.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. The grant was awarded a year ago, and in January 2021 Diana Avalos-Leos came on board as contract manager with Arlen De La Rocha as project coordinator. They hope to soon add a community engagement navigator to spark interest in the schools, Fourth Plain businesses the faith community and other potential partners.

The first cohort of 15 women has Zoomed in on twice-monthly, confidential listening sessions, designed to make sure every participant walks away with information to help them make informed choices and to shape their goals. They've learned about the steps to becoming licensed child care providers. They've heard from the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce about getting business licenses. Mercy Corps and the Yakima Community Foundation have shared vital information.

"We've discovered there is a workforce gap on both sides of the fence," Avalos-Leos said. "There's a gap in child care providers for our workforce. And there are gaps in the workforce in terms of (bilingual and bicultural) coaches and advisers. We had to go outside of the region to get that support."

A high school diploma or equivalent is the first step to a child care license, followed by early childhood education. But there are no Spanish-language GED or ECE courses in Clark County. Many of the women come from their home countries with college educations, but their transcripts aren't recognized here.

Another barrier is the square footage required to operate a licensed child care center. "Especially for a participant who lives in an apartment," Avalos-Leos said; apartment complexes often don't allow child care businesses.

One goal of the project is building a shared services alliance, a one-stop-shop for all the forms and resources needed to gain a license, plus shared marketing, record keeping, purchasing coops, billing and fee collection, human resources, and substitute pools, according to Jodi Wall, executive director of early care and education at ESD 112.

All the first participants are still in the early stages of working toward their licenses. Avalos-Leos expects by next year at least two will have licenses in hand. **"We've been building stepping stones, a foundation," she said, so future groups will find the way has already been paved.**

On that foundation will be built not only child care slots, but revitalized economic opportunities and a workforce that can create stability in the neighborhoods of central Vancouver.

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Find us today at: [instagram.com/self.for.kidz](https://www.instagram.com/self.for.kidz)

Let's Do This!!

Give More 24! is right around the corner and we have big news to share. We are launching a new partnership during GM24 and we want you to be a part of it! Stay tuned for more details. Let's work together on September 23rd to turn up the volume on giving for SELF! It's easy to do, go to givemore24.org, search for Support for Early Learning and Families and donate!!

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