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First 5 Yolo mini-grants fund health, literacy programs

Programs aimed at preparing young children for kindergarten were among the biggest beneficiaries of \$40,000 in mini-grants awarded last week by First 5 Yolo.

A total of 12 programs received funding, with close to \$18,000 going to early reading programs run by Sutter Davis Pediatrics, the Yolo County Library, Woodland Library and the Northern California Children's Therapy Center.

Additional mini-grants went to programs that serve children's social, emotional and physical health. Among the recipients were the Yolo County Multi-Disciplinary Interview Center — which provides everything from forensic interviews and medical exams to therapy and support services to child victims of sexual abuse — as well as to the Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Center for a program on protecting children.

Mini-grants are awarded annually by First 5 Yolo to community groups and partner agencies for short-term projects, including training, program equipment and supplies. Projects must benefit expectant parents, children up to age 5 and their families. The maximum award is \$5,000 per project.

Yolo County Supervisor Don Saylor, who chairs the First 5 Yolo Commission, said 26 requests for mini-grants came in this year.

“Each proposal demonstrated a serious need in our communities,” Saylor said. “Since we couldn't fund everything, we prioritized the proposals based on the greatest positive long-term impact for Yolo County children and families.”

In addition to funding kindergarten readiness projects and programs aimed at protecting children from sexual assault, mini-grants went to the following programs:

- * EMQ FamiliesFirst for staff training on the effects of drug exposure on children;
- * Yolo Wayfarer Center for skilled interventions to help reduce the stress children experience when their families are facing homelessness;
- * Hearing Loss Association, Woodland chapter, for a preschool hearing screening program; and
- * City of West Sacramento Parks and Community Services for a tot-lot playground in Westfield Village.

First 5 Yolo is funded through tobacco tax revenue under a voter-approved initiative passed in 1998. Funds are administered through First 5 commissions in each California county with the focus on education, health and child care programs that promote early childhood development from pregnancy to age 5.

Funds are dispersed to agency providers throughout the county.

Mini-grants throughout the year, Saylor said, make a big difference for many agencies.

“Even a small amount helps them expand services and, in some cases, reduce costs to the community,” he said.

For more information about First 5 Yolo, visit <http://www.first5yolo.org>.

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