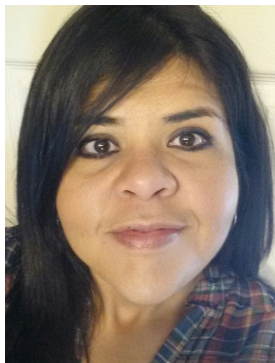


# Children need a chance to succeed

Monica Castillo 10:09 p.m. PDT April 3, 2014

*The recent Community Health Monitor for 2013 from Health Assessment Resource Center has added more clear understanding of the needs of children and families in the Coachella Valley.*



(Photo: Courtesy photo)

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The recent Community Health Monitor for 2013 from Health Assessment Resource Center has added more clear understanding of the needs of children and families in the Coachella Valley.

Of the more than 48,144 children younger than 12 years, half are solely cared for by their parents, the other half (24,000) are sometimes in the care of family members (34.1 percent) and at least 2,407 children receive some of their care in licensed family child care homes and group centers across our valley cities. Within the past year, 10.6 percent of parents of children 12 years and younger were unable to find child care for a week or more, most often because they could not afford the care (HARC, 2013). Also in the HARC data, parent's greatest concerns for their child are the quality of education (12.3 percent), their emotional well-being (7.4 percent) and their weight or physical fitness (7.1 percent).

Our children in the Coachella Valley deserve the best we can offer them during these early learning years. "Early years are learning years" has been a slogan of our National Association for the Education of Young Children for many years. Research has shown children who receive early childhood education learning opportunities, provided by well-trained early childhood teachers in high-quality family child care homes and group centers fare better than their peers, particularly when research is done with children living in poverty.

Children need meaningful, trust-filled relationships to help them actively explore an array of rich experiences in order to learn. Children learn the foundations of math, science, language and creativity from helping Mom and Dad sort laundry in the home or tools in the garage. Early childhood programs extend that learning through play with other children and well-qualified early childhood teachers.

A group of dedicated early childhood partners are hosting a Day of the Young Child/Dia del Niño free family festival on Saturday morning simultaneously in three locations: Cathedral City Civic Center on Highway 111, Coachella in the city park and the La Quinta Civic Center Park off Washington Street. All three events will be from 9 a.m. to noon and free to all participants.

There will be booths of activities and snacks for children, their families and teachers. Local dignitaries and early childhood educators will be recognized around 9:30 a.m. at the events followed by a Children's Parade. In La Quinta, the public library is co-hosting its annual event that day and time.

Local businesses and groups who are partnering to provide this event include the Riverside County Child Care Consortium, Palm Valley School, Augustine Casino, Coca-Cola, Shalhoub Family McDonald's, Lakeshore Learning Materials, The K.I.D.S. Directory, Burrtec Waste Industries, Nestle Water North America, FIND Food Bank along with Coachella Valley, Desert Sands and Palm Springs unified school districts and College of the Desert. We offer a special thanks to the cities of Cathedral City, Coachella and La Quinta for allowing the celebration in their city!

Join with us as we celebrate young children, their families and the dedicated early childhood teachers who serve them! Continue to support them by promoting early literacy programs, valuing the role parents play in the lives of children, thanking teachers who care for our children, and working to ensure that our public policies support early learning for all young children.

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