

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

Setting the Stage for a Statewide Movement



**"If children are our future,
shouldn't we invest more in them now?"**

May 2010

By Martin Merzer

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	5
Project Conception and Initial Development	9
The Place	12
The Cost and Funding	12
The Organizing Principle	13
The Media Campaign	13
The Community Outreach Campaign	15
Measured Achievements of the Project	19
Call to Action	24
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Appendix A: Prominent Floridians Who Helped Plan This Project	25
Appendix B: Children's Movement of Florida Steering Committee	26
Appendix C: Representative Newspaper Ad	29
Appendix D: Television and Newspaper Media Buy	30
Appendix E: Palm Beach County Speaker Events	32

Executive Summary

"When you are dealing with children's issues, there is no partisanship."

– Roberto Martinez

More than 800,000 Florida children do not have health insurance, rendering many of them "medical orphans," young people who lack an ongoing relationship with a pediatrician or other health care professional. The state's pre-kindergarten program does not meet most national standards. Early screening and treatment programs for special needs are poorly coordinated, difficult to access and of inconsistent quality. Florida's businesses and community organizations do not have a strong commitment to strengthening child mentoring and parent skill-building programs in the state.

All this – and more – hinders the physical and emotional development of Florida's children, weighing heavily on them and on all of us. The associated human, social and economic costs – higher death rates, lower educational achievement scores, mushrooming costs of remedial programs and law enforcement operations – already are evident, and they are growing, and they soon will become crushing.

When it comes to early childhood development programs, it is difficult to imagine priorities and policies more myopic than those currently in place in Florida.

But now, primarily as a result of a just-completed, multifaceted educational and informational campaign called The Children's Project of Palm Beach, we also know that Floridians are ready, even eager, to be rallied to the cause of early childhood development.

More specifically, we now know that – when made more fully aware of the state's shortcomings – an overwhelming majority of Floridians would enlist in a nonpartisan, statewide campaign to assign the state's highest priority to children's issues in general and early childhood development in particular.

That was the key finding of The Children's Project of Palm Beach, funded in full by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, led by the Miami-based Early Childhood Initiative Foundation and organized in consultation with a 27-member steering committee.

The project sought to determine the feasibility of organizing and building a powerful Children's Movement of Florida. This statewide movement would develop awareness of the insufficiency of Florida's early childhood programs and reshape the state's priorities to ensure that our children receive the assistance they need to develop into healthy, educated and productive citizens.

Conducted during April and May, The Children's Project of Palm Beach combined high-frequency television commercials and newspaper ads with 35 neighborhood and

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

community events attended by nearly 2,000 people. These informational events were moderated by David Lawrence Jr., president of The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation and the project's primary organizer, by state Board of Education member Roberto Martinez, and by others. Lawrence and Martinez co-chair the steering committee.

The strategy was devised by Sergio Bendixen, president of Bendixen & Amandi, an internationally known public opinion research and communications consulting firm. On the ground, the grassroots organizing project was run by Susan Vodicka, a veteran campaign manager who led a team of six field organizers.

Each element of the campaign supported the other, and scientific surveys were conducted before the project began and as it was ending.

The countywide surveys demonstrated – in dramatic terms – that the campaign significantly increased awareness of the inadequacy of children's programs in Florida and substantially enhanced support for a statewide children's movement.

Among the findings:

- Fifty-eight percent of registered voters in Palm Beach County now believe that improving services for children should be the state's top spending priority, compared to 36 percent before the campaign began.
- Fifty-one percent of the county's voters now answer correctly when asked how much of the human brain develops before the age of 5, compared to 27 percent before the media campaign repeatedly delivered that key information.
- Eighty-seven percent of the voters in Palm Beach County would support a statewide Children's Movement of Florida to promote quality services for children and families, compared to 61 percent before the campaign began.

These findings lead to a conclusion that ordinary Floridians are poised for action on behalf of the state's children – and that substantial support can be developed and marshaled for a Children's Movement of Florida.

"The Children's Project of Palm Beach was a huge success," Bendixen said. "We met all of our key objectives.

"The impact of our communications campaign, and the interest and support generated by the grassroots effort, as demonstrated by the poll results, speak for themselves," he said. "Now, we are ready to do it in every region of Florida."

The full report, which follows, further describes and analyzes the pilot project and its findings.

The Children's Project of Palm Beach
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Introduction

"If children are our future, shouldn't we invest more in them now?"

– Slogan of The Children's Project of Palm Beach

The facts are unassailable, the justifications unacceptable and often unfathomable, the consequences unavoidable.

As a state, we are failing to care for our children at the earliest, most crucial, most influential period of their lives. This failure hurts our children, and it ultimately adds to the economic burdens borne by Florida's taxpayers.

By nearly all measures, Florida ranks last or next to last in the nation in the percentage of uninsured children, leaving more than 800,000 of our youngest citizens without health insurance. Florida's constitutionally mandated free pre-kindergarten program fails to meet most national standards. Special needs are evident in as many as one in eight children, but Florida's early screening and treatment programs are poorly coordinated, only sporadically available and of inconsistent quality and efficacy.

These and other failures weigh heavily on our children in terms of ideal or even adequate physical, emotional and educational development. One of many examples: When uninsured children enter a hospital in Florida, they are 1.5 times as likely as insured children to die there, largely because access to treatment has been delayed.

Tragically, these failures also weigh on our state's children in terms of lost potential – dreams and ambitions permanently grounded even before wings can sprout.

And it weighs, or should weigh, on all of us in terms of simple human decency: We live in a state that is not meeting a fundamental civic obligation – the proper nurturing of its youngest, most vulnerable, most promising citizens.

Moreover, if these multiple failures remain uncorrected, growing and interacting in ways both predictable and unforeseen, the associated economic and social burdens soon will become crushing.

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

Studies show that early screening and treatment of special needs can save \$30,000 to \$100,000 *per child* over the long run.

Long-term studies also show that every dollar invested in high-quality early childhood programs can save society \$4 to \$17 in costs associated with more prisons, more remedial programs, higher health-care obligations. In addition, a study conducted specifically for this project found that every dollar the state spends to provide adequate health care for children generates \$4.55 in additional economic activity.

This situation is all the more indefensible because we know that 90 percent of human brain development occurs by age 5. We know that good health is a prerequisite for educational achievement. We know that early childhood programs produce significantly higher economic returns than school-age programs.

And, at the same time, we know that one of every three of our sixth-grade public school students does not meet grade-level reading proficiency standards as measured by the FCAT. We know that one of every four Florida public high school students is not graduating. We know that child abuse and the lack of prenatal care are immense problems in this state, and that the Legislature just cut \$10 million from Healthy Families and \$4.7 million from Healthy Start, two programs with remarkable success in dealing with these issues.

But now, through new surveys and consultations and, most significantly, as a result of a just-completed, multifaceted informational campaign called The Children's Project of Palm Beach, we also know this:

Floridians want to do better by their children. When made aware of the state's shortcomings, they agree in overwhelming numbers and with conviction that Florida must assign its highest funding priority to children's issues in general and to early childhood development in particular.

They will respond to a nonpartisan, statewide, instructional children's issues campaign that dynamically marshals facts and emotion and pure logic.

They are ready to be rallied to the cause.

They are ready to enlist in The Children's Movement of Florida.

Here is how we know this:

Funded by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, led by the Miami-based Early Childhood Initiative Foundation, organized in consultation with a 27-member steering committee, The Children's Project of Palm Beach was envisioned as a pilot project.

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

The goal: To determine and measure the feasibility of organizing and building a powerful Children's Movement of Florida. This movement will develop and amplify awareness of the inadequacy of Florida's early childhood development programs, the resulting crisis that already envelopes our children and our economy, and the need to reshape and elevate the state's priorities for children.

Conducted during April and May, the countywide outreach project combined a muscular blitz of television commercials and newspaper ads with 35 neighborhood and community events moderated by members of the steering committee and by the project's staff.

Scientific surveys were conducted before and after the campaign to determine the project's ability to "move the numbers" through enhanced awareness of the problem and the magnitude of support that could be generated for a statewide children's movement.

More details of both the project and the results will follow, but here are some key results of the before-and-after surveys:

- Fifty-eight percent of registered voters in Palm Beach County now believe that improving services for children should be the state's foremost spending priority, compared to 36 percent before the campaign began. Moreover, improving services for children is now among the top three priorities of 89 percent of the county's registered voters, compared to a pre-project 71 percent.

What should be the **top spending priority** in the Florida state budget?

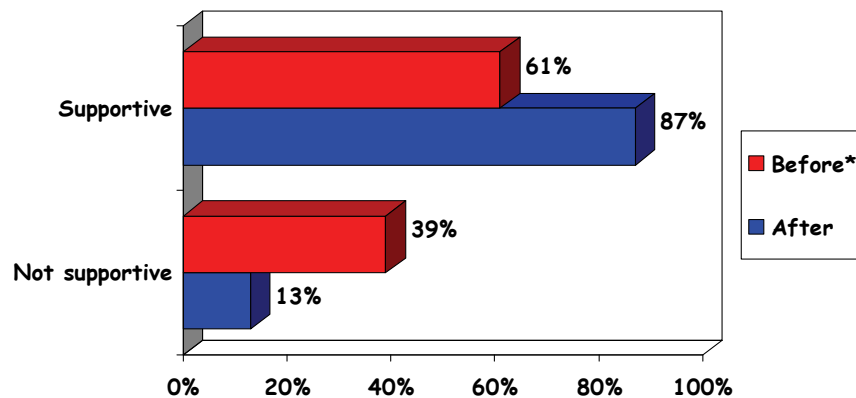
	<i>Before</i>	<i>After</i>
Improving services for children	36%	58%
Reducing property taxes	25%	13%
Maintaining the roads and highways	10%	5%
Increasing programs for the elderly	9%	8%
Protecting the environment	7%	9%
Developing a high-speed rail system	3%	2%
Constructing new prisons	1%	1%

PRIORITY OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES +22%

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

- Fifty-one percent of the county's voters now answer correctly when asked how much of the human brain develops before the age of 5, compared to 27 percent before the project repeatedly shared that key information. (The answer: 90 percent of the brain develops during the first five years of life.)
- An impressive 87 percent of Palm Beach County voters would support a statewide Children's Movement of Florida to promote quality services for children and families, compared to 61 percent before the project began.

There will be a campaign this year to promote quality services for children and families. It will be called **The Children's Movement of Florida**. Would you be supportive of this campaign?



SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN'S MOVEMENT +26%

Moreover, an extensive statewide survey conducted in August 2009 in association with this project found that:

- Eighty-eight percent of likely Florida voters agreed that a shortage of quality services for children and family is a very or somewhat important problem.
- Sixty-seven percent of likely voters would support a statewide campaign to promote quality services for children and families. Majorities existed across the political spectrum – Democrats, Republicans and independents.
- Extremely high support exists for providing health insurance to all children and early screening programs for developmental disorders.

When it comes to the priorities assigned to early childhood development, it is clear that ordinary Floridians are poised for action, are ready to heed the call, and are yearning for more information and for effective nonpartisan leadership.

Project conception and initial development

"We need to be more active, more assertive on these issues. What we're trying to do is make children a priority in this state. This is about the future of our community and of our country."

– David Lawrence Jr.

In many ways, The Children's Project of Palm Beach evolved from the highly successful August 2008 reauthorization campaign for The Children's Trust in Miami-Dade County.

In that election, conducted as the economy was collapsing, 85.4 percent of Miami-Dade's voters agreed to a modest but permanent increase in their property taxes. This tax now raises about \$100 million annually for hundreds of early intervention and prevention programs that serve the county's children.

The reauthorization campaign was led by David Lawrence Jr., a nationally known journalist and former publisher of The Miami Herald. After retiring from The Herald in 1999, Lawrence devoted himself to children's issues, forming The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation and emerging as a national leader in the field.

The campaign's chief strategist was the internationally known Sergio Bendixen of Bendixen & Amandi, a public opinion research and communications consulting firm based in Coral Gables, Fla. In recent years, Bendixen also has emerged as a champion of early childhood issues, often working in close association with Lawrence.

Based on the success of the 2008 effort in Miami-Dade County and his decades of involvement in local and national political campaigns, Bendixen sensed that there might be significant citizen support for a statewide movement that focused specifically on children's causes.

One key organizing principle of this movement: Unlike campaigns successfully waged on behalf of The Children's Trust in Miami-Dade and by seven other "Children's Services Councils" elsewhere in Florida, this effort does **not** envision or advocate new taxes or an increase in existing taxes.

"This discussion is not about whether you will pay higher taxes," Lawrence said. "It is a discussion about priorities."

Another key to success, Bendixen and Lawrence determined, was to identify what *state residents* believed were the most important priorities when it came to early childhood programs, and to build a consensus to achieve those goals. This must be a bottom-up movement based on grassroots needs, grassroots support.

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

Hence, in January 2009, Lawrence and Bendixen hosted a group of citizens from throughout Florida. For more than two hours, those attending the meeting focused on specific children's policy issues. They developed an initial list of 15 policy issues, later narrowed to four.

At that point, Roberto Martinez, a former U.S. attorney in South Florida, now a member of the Florida Board of Education and long identified with Gov. Charlie Crist and with former Gov. Jeb Bush, suggested additional discussions with civic, business and community leaders to determine if they might identify additional children's policy issues and/or frame them differently.

That led to gatherings in Orlando (hosted by former Lt. Gov. Toni Jennings), Panama City (hosted by former House Speaker Allan Bense) and in Tampa (hosted by Kathleen Shanahan, now a member of the Florida Board of Education and formerly Gov. Bush's chief of staff).

Ten prominent Floridians – all identified with efforts to build better futures for the children of Florida – agreed to proceed further and to accept overall planning responsibility. A list of these volunteers is available at the end of this report as Appendix A.

Armed with valuable perspectives and recommendations, Lawrence, Bendixen and other leaders of the group took the next step: They conducted eight focus groups of likely Florida voters – two in Tampa, two in Jacksonville, two in Fort Lauderdale and two in Miami (these last two in Spanish).

These sessions probed for the respondents' opinions of six potential policy initiatives. Listed in order of the support demonstrated by these likely Florida voters, the initiatives were:

No. 1 – Health care: Ensuring that every child in the state has access to health insurance and to an ongoing relationship with a pediatrician, well-child visits, immunizations, other preventative measures, and treatment of illnesses.

No. 2 – Early intervention: Screening every child at birth and at ages 2, 4 and 6; assessing within a month every child with a suspected special need; ensuring timely access to speech, physical or behavioral therapy.

No. 3 – School year: Lengthening the school year from 180 to 220 days and the school day by two hours.

No. 4 – Quality child care programs: Requiring a one-star, two-star, etc., statewide quality rating system for all child-care and preschool sites, intended to substantially enhance the educational quality of these operations and help parents make informed decisions.

No. 5 – Quality pre-kindergarten opportunities: Substantially enhancing quality standards for Florida's voluntary pre-K program by requiring associate degrees and, eventually, bachelor's degrees for classroom leaders, along with research-based curricula and quality-based accreditation.

No. 6 – Parent skill building: Offering every new parent a free skill-building program and every first-time and teen mother a home visit by a qualified pregnancy and early childhood expert.

That was the qualitative phase of the research. Now, it was time for the quantitative phase.

In August 2009, Bendixen & Amadi, noted for its work with Democratic issues and candidates, joined with The Tarrance Group of Alexandria, Va., nationally known for its polling and strategy work for Republicans, to conduct a scientific survey of Florida voters.

The poll of 1,515 likely voters, with a 2.5 percent margin of error (suggesting high reliability), showed two of the six issues rising to the top – both with significant statewide support:

1. Health insurance for all Florida children.
2. Accessible, affordable screening available to all parents during their children's early years to determine if there might be special needs – ranging from autism to speech and hearing challenges to attention deficit disorders – that, if treated early, could improve their children's chances for success in school and in life.

The top education issue: Improving the quality of Florida's voluntary universal prekindergarten program. This program, passed by voters as a constitutional amendment in 2002, still lacks many of the quality measures that lead to positive outcomes for children.

Next, Lawrence and the researchers traveled to 11 Florida communities to share the results and gather comments and potential support. Those two-hour gatherings of 20 to 35 people, each conducted by one of Florida's most prominent leaders, were held successively in Panama City, Tallahassee, Gainesville, Jacksonville, Boynton Beach, Port St. Lucie, Orlando, Tampa, Naples, Fort Lauderdale and Miami. Martinez of Miami attended the final six sessions.

From those sessions came enthusiastic ownership of the initiative by Democrats, Republicans and independents. Twenty-five of those leaders (a list can be found at the end of this report as Appendix B) agreed to join Lawrence and Martinez on a steering committee to develop and evaluate steps to follow.

The first of those steps: The Children's Project of Palm Beach.

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

"When enough people care about the same thing, they can make something happen."

– Susan Vodicka, project manager

Here are some details of the pilot campaign that became known as The Children's Project of Palm Beach.

The Place

Palm Beach County emerged as the preferred site for a variety of reasons.

It has a diverse population (74.5 percent non-Hispanic white, 17.3 percent Hispanic, 15.7 percent black, 2.2 percent Asian.) Its political affiliations are widely distributed (46 percent Democrat, 29 percent Republican, 21 percent independent). It has a largely self-contained media market.

"Palm Beach County is a good microcosm of the state," said Susan Vodicka, a veteran campaign manager selected by Bendixen and Lawrence to run the project's ground operation and a staff of six field organizers.

When it comes to children, 16 percent of the county's young people live in federally defined conditions of poverty; only 65 percent of the county's entering kindergarten students are considered "ready for school" based on the state's kindergarten readiness assessment.

"In Palm Beach County, there are thousands of children in first grade who already feel like they are failures," Lawrence said. "And because teaching, for many reasons, is sometimes about triaging, we are off to the races. What a desperate tragedy. This is another reason why early involvement in quality outcomes is a good investment."

The Cost and Funding

The campaign's budget was \$400,000. The basic breakdown: \$385,000 for contract services such as media production and placement, event planning, short-term salaries, etc.; \$10,000 for travel; \$5,000 for evaluation.

No tax dollars were used during any phase of the project.

All of the money came from a \$400,000 grant by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which has helped fund other early childhood development projects led by Lawrence and his colleagues.

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

Established in 1930, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation supports children, families and communities as they strengthen and create conditions that propel vulnerable children to achieve success as individuals and as contributors to the larger community and society. Grants are concentrated in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and southern Africa.

The Organizing Principle

A vigorous media campaign would combine with an ambitious series of neighborhood and community meetings, each element supporting the other. The objective: To inform Palm Beach County residents of the crisis facing early education and development programs and the need to make the well-being and education of our children the state's highest priority.

"We had to find out whether regular residents of a community, in this case, Palm Beach County, could be energized, if we could get them interested in children's issues and motivate them into being supportive of the movement," Bendixen said.

This would be a purely informational and educational campaign – an attempt to build awareness of the problem and generate support for a movement to solve the problem. No attempt would be made to suggest a specific course of action or a particular re-ordering of other funding priorities. No connection would be made to any elected official or political candidate.

The Media Campaign

Bendixen and his staffers commissioned the production of six television commercials and several newspaper advertisements. All appeared in heavy rotation in Palm Beach County media between April 19 and May 16.

The TV spots and the newspaper ads were designed around a central theme (though a few minor variations also were tested): "If children are our future, shouldn't we invest more in them now?"

That central organizing theme and the approach and execution of the commercials and ads were developed by Bendixen's staffers and by Thom Mozloom of The M Network, a Miami-based branding and advertising agency.

The television commercials (four 15-second spots and two 30-second spots) showed images of impressionable children and other scenes as an announcer compared the paucity of funding for certain children's programs to the more substantial funding of other state priorities.

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

Here are the messages:

Road repairs: "This year, Florida will spend about six billion dollars on transportation, roads and highways, which is six times more than what will be spent on early education for children. If children are our future, shouldn't we invest more in them now?"

Juvenile justice: "This year, Florida will spend about six hundred million dollars on juvenile justice programs, which is far more than the budget for Florida's pre-kindergarten program. If children are our future, shouldn't we invest in them early?"

Environment: "This year, Florida will spend about a billion dollars for environmental protection, which is more than twice the budget for Florida's pre-kindergarten program. If children are our future, shouldn't we invest more in them now?"

Corrections and prisons: "This year, Florida will spend about one and half billion dollars on corrections and prisons, which is a lot more than what will be spent on early education for children. If children are our future, shouldn't we invest more in them now?"

Brain development (30 seconds): "From the moment they arrive in the world, children are learning. In fact, 90 percent of brain development happens before the age of five. Yet, in our state, the vast majority of money spent on education ignores this reality. Ninety percent of brain development before the age of five. If children are our future, shouldn't we invest more in their education when it really matters?"

Will not catch up (30 seconds): "When it comes to early education, Florida is woefully behind. As a result, so many of our children entering kindergarten will never catch up. For them, the future is bleak. Higher dropout rates. Higher unemployment rates. Higher crime rates. In fact, without quality early education, the only thing that will be in decline is our standard of living. If children are our future, shouldn't we invest more in them now?"

The commercials can be viewed at this web address:

<http://www.childrensprojectofpalmbeach.org/videos/our-campaign/>

The newspaper ads (one of which can be found at the end of this report as Appendix C) challenged readers to answer two of these six questions:

- What percentage of the human brain develops before the age of five?
- How many children in Florida do not have any type of health insurance?
- How long do you think it takes children who enter kindergarten without quality educational experiences, to catch up on reading and literacy skills with their peers?

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

- For which item does the Florida budget allocate the least amount of money – transportation, prisons, the environment, early childhood education?
- What is the percentage of young people not eligible for military service because they fail to graduate from high school, they have a criminal record or they are physically unfit?
- Where does the United States rank in high school graduation rates compared to other industrialized countries?

For answers, readers were referred to the project's website:

<http://www.childrensprojectofpalmbeach.org/>

To a lesser degree, the television spots also referred viewers to the website, which offered anyone sharing contact information a chance to win a \$50 Publix Supermarket gift certificate.

As a group, the TV commercials appeared 764 times during the four-week period on the four major television stations serving Palm Beach County, with a media placement cost of \$157,952. The newspaper ads ran nine times, at a cost of \$25,060.

As we soon shall see, the TV commercials were widely seen; the newspaper ads were not. More specifics of the media buy can be found at the end of this report as Appendix D.

The Community Outreach Campaign

Applying a lesson learned during the 2008 Children's Trust campaign in Miami-Dade County, Bendixen and Vodicka mapped an ambitious series of neighborhood and community meetings and events.

They knew that these sessions, combined with the "covering fire" of a media blitz, could ignite and fuel bursts of support at the grassroots level, each of which would spread through various elements of the community.

"At a certain point, the commercials and the grassroots organizational efforts start feeding on each other," Bendixen said.

They also would serve as a living laboratory, giving project leaders a chance to meet directly with potential supporters (and potential opponents).

"I really wanted to have the opportunity to have face-to-face interaction with them," Vodicka said. "That way, they could raise questions, make comments, express concerns, ask us to clarify what we were up to."

And that – all of that – was what happened in Palm Beach County.

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

At first, Vodicka's field organizers – David Abrams, Theresa Amandi, Leslie Barkett, Kerline Boursiquot, Marlina Hasday and John Knight – had a difficult time stimulating interest in the project and enlisting local assistance in sponsoring public events.

"You're asking people to open up their homes to you, and they really don't know very much about what this project is about," Barkett said.

But she and the others soon hit pay dirt, the outreach campaign achieving traction shortly after the TV commercials began appearing.

"In the beginning, I didn't think any of this was going to happen," Abrams said. "But, in the matter of about three days, it all started coming together."

In the end, the team managed to exceed the original goal of 30 sessions. A total of 35 events were held in private homes, in country club restaurants or meeting rooms, at civic and business organizations, and in some public schools. Nearly 2,000 people attended the sessions. Details of the events can be found at the end of this report as Appendix E.

"I had a really good team of field organizers with high energy," Vodicka said. "They've done a great job.

"This is more difficult to organize than a political campaign, which has a date certain," she said. "And, with a political candidate, people gravitate to the campaign.

"This is more nebulous. But the TV commercials gave us the cover. They worked out really well. People soon understood that we were legitimate."

At each event, Lawrence, another member of the steering committee or Vodicka would share opening remarks about the unacceptable status of children and children's programs in Florida and the need to do better. Then, they would offer a 34-slide PowerPoint presentation that illustrated and dramatized the situation.

The presentation:

- Reminded viewers of the power of other grassroots movements, including the civil rights movement and the current "Tea Party" movement.
- Traced the recent history of attempts to improve children's programs in Florida.
- Shared examples of programs that would benefit children and families (skill-building for parents, high-quality mentoring, quality pre-kindergarten opportunities, stimulating child-care centers, screening and treatment for special needs, and access to quality health care).
- Described the various human and financial costs shouldered by Florida and the nation due to the shortchanging of children's programs.

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

- Explained in greater detail the Children's Project of Palm Beach, and showed the TV commercials and newspaper ads produced for the project.
- Focused tightly on the situation in Palm Beach County, noting that 35 percent of the county's children are entering kindergarten while being judged not ready for school, 31 percent of the county's third-grade students and 60 percent of its 10th grade students are not reading at minimum proficiency, 24 percent of its high school students are not graduating within five years, and 5,052 of its juveniles were detained by police last year.

One approach proved to connect particularly well with virtually all audiences: The impact these shortsighted approaches to children's issues already is having on national security.

For years, some experts have been warning that the condition of the nation's public education and children's care systems posed a greater long-term threat to the United States than international terrorism. And one fact that aroused particular attention and made a particularly deep impression during the project's presentations came from a report, "Ready, Willing and Unable to Serve," recently released by a group of retired U.S. generals, admirals and civilian military officials:

Seventy-five percent of young American men and women, between the ages of 17 and 24, cannot enter military service because they either fail to graduate from high school, have a criminal record, or are physically unfit.

"It is very clear to me that the way we take care of our children, how we educate our children, is a national security issue," Martinez told one group. "The well being and the strength of this country depends on how well we treat our children, as well as on our national defense."

That session was sponsored by the Republican Club of the Palm Beaches, which met at the Bear Lakes Country Club in West Palm Beach. It turned out to be one of the more dynamic sessions, with about 25 attendees discussing and debating various elements of the presentation for more than two hours.

As one would expect, a few of the 35 events were less successful.

One, at an elementary school in an impoverished section of Boynton Beach, involved about 90 parents of incoming kindergarten students. Gathered at the end of a workday, these parents were far more interested in navigating the complexities of public school registration – school officials delivered the lengthy series of instructions in rotating fragments of English, then Spanish, then Creole – than in overarching policy issues. Thus, the Children's Project presentation, which came at the end of the meeting, fell flat.

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

"Everything that could go wrong at the 'kindergarten roundup' did, but at least we got it all out there in one single event," Vodicka said. "And we were able to dramatically coach the field team on what questions to ask in order to make certain that all future events were a good fit for our message."

During virtually all of the events, one or more participants expressed the suspicion that new or higher taxes would be sought to fund improvements to children's programs, a fear that Martinez and other moderators swiftly sought to dispel.

"This is not about throwing money at projects," Martinez told the Republican group at Bear Lakes Country Club. "I wouldn't endorse that."

Instead, he said, it is simply about priorities.

"When it comes time to fight for the budget, the money, the pie, we're usually outwitted, outgunned by lobbyists for the business community," Martinez said. "Frankly, I think that children's issues suffer because they really don't have an advocate speaking for them as vigorously as they should all the time."

Other concerns also were expressed by members of the audience.

"We have a huge breakdown in our family systems, and if you can't improve that, you can't improve what happens in the educational system," said one attendee, Melissa Nash Andrews, the Republican club's president. "The problem is really a social issue and what's happening at home with these children, and I want to hear what your plans are about that."

Still, she and virtually all other attendees at these sessions were open to doing *something* about the problem.

"I've seen the commercials and my initial reaction was that we spend more money to be reactive than we spend to be proactive," Andrews said. "Once you take that message in, you ask yourself, 'What do we need to do differently to change this?' And I'm here today to learn about this because I care about changing this."

At a very different community meeting sponsored at a Methodist Church by the Human Services Coalition of Palm Beach County, Shandra Stringer said she was "startled" by the facts shared during the presentation, which was moderated by Lawton "Bud" Chiles, son of the former governor and a long-time child advocate, and by Vodicka.

"It made me think that one person can make a difference," Stringer said. "I definitely would be willing to support a children's movement in Florida."

Stringer volunteers at a local church and works with a reading program that serves children between the ages of six and 13. This has given her a ground-level of the problem at hand.

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

"We started a reading club and the kids couldn't read, so how do you have a reading club with kids who can't read?" Stringer said. "So we had to start a tutoring program. It's just a whole debacle."

Measured Achievements of the Project

"This is noble work, but it is also very practical work."

– David Lawrence Jr.

Results of the post-campaign poll make it crystal clear that Floridians are poised to enlist in a powerful Children's Movement of Florida.

Also clear is the conclusion that an informational and educational campaign built along the lines of the approach tested by The Children's Project of Palm Beach can coalesce this support into a politically potent and irresistible force.

"The media campaign was a great success," Bendixen said. "It demonstrated that, over a short period of time, the voters of Palm Beach County could be informed and educated about facts and issues that would make them a lot more likely to be supportive of the children's movement and the need to invest in quality children's programs."

Among the poll's findings and the resulting conclusions:

- Nearly nine of every 10 voters in Palm Beach County now believe that improving services for children must be one of the state's highest priorities. That compares to about seven in 10 before the Children's Project of Palm Beach began.

The biggest gain: The 58 percent of registered voters who now believe that improving services for children must be the state's No. 1 spending priority (up from the pre-project 36 percent.)

What should be the **top spending priority** in the Florida state budget?

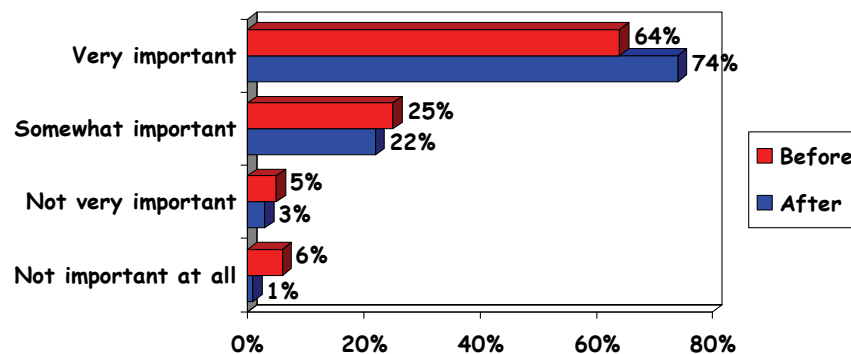
	<i>Before</i>	<i>After</i>
Improving services for children	36%	58%
Reducing property taxes	25%	13%
Maintaining the roads and highways	10%	5%
Increasing programs for the elderly	9%	8%
Protecting the environment	7%	9%
Developing a high-speed rail system	3%	2%
Constructing new prisons	1%	1%

PRIORITY OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES +22%

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

- Seventy-four percent of the county's registered voters now *personally* consider the improvement of children's services as "very important." Another 22 percent consider it "somewhat important."

How important of a priority is "improving services for children" to you personally?



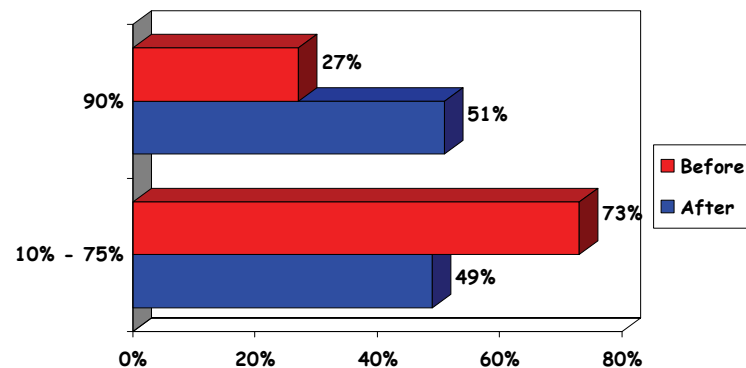
IMPORTANCE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES +10%

The aggregate of 96 percent, a significant improvement over the pre-project 89 percent, represents near-unanimous agreement.

- The educational element of the project's media campaign (particularly as expressed through the television commercials) resonated deeply with county residents.

The project achieved a near-doubling in the percentage of registered voters who now know that 90 percent of the human brain develops before the age of five (51 percent know the correct answer compared to 27 percent before the campaign repeatedly shared that key information).

What percentage of the human brain do you think develops before the age of five?



BRAIN DEVELOPMENT +24%

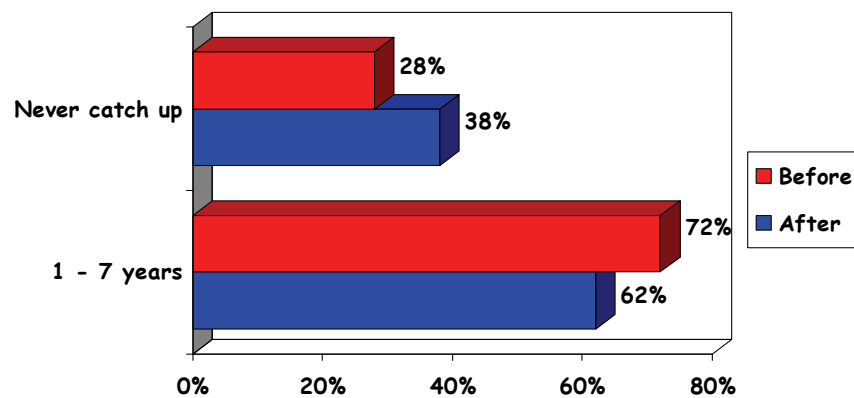
The Children's Project of Palm Beach

One in four voters now know that more than 800,000 Florida children do not have health insurance, compared to about one in five before the project began.

Twenty-two percent of county voters know that three-quarters of the nation's young people are ineligible for military service because they failed to graduate from high school, have a criminal record or are physically unfit. Only 13 percent knew that before the campaign began.

Thirty-eight percent understand that children who enter kindergarten without quality educational experiences never catch up with their peers, compared to 26 percent in the pre-project poll. (This message could use some tweaking).

How long do you think it takes children that enter Kindergarten without quality education experiences to catch up on reading and literacy skills with their peers?



"NEVER CATCH UP" +10%

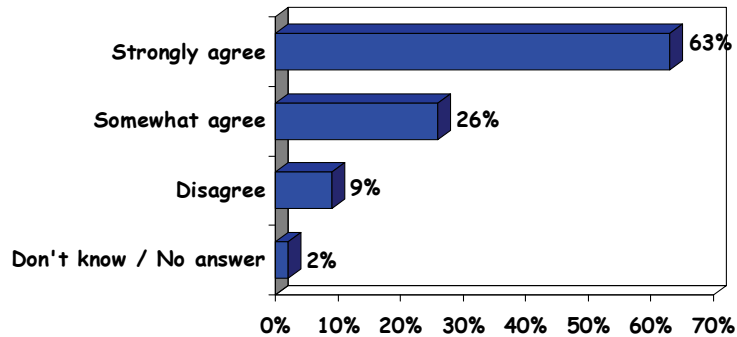
- Sixty-three percent of county voters strongly agree with the movement's newly created mission statement and another 26 percent somewhat agree with it – a total of 89 percent bonding with it to a meaningful degree.

The statement:

“The Children’s Movement of Florida believes that the well-being and education of our children in Florida must be the highest priority of government, business, non-profit institutions and families. The economic future of our state and the stability of the communities we live in depend on achieving this goal. The major objective of the citizen-led, non-partisan Children’s Movement of Florida is to educate and encourage the political, business and civic leaders, and the parents and people of this state to make the well-being and education of our children our highest priority including in the way we invest our public resources.”

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

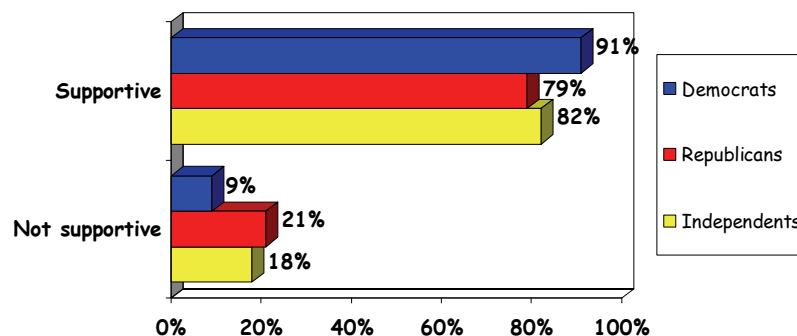
Do you agree or disagree with the mission and objectives of
The Children's Movement of Florida?



- **A startling and gratifying 87 percent of Palm Beach County voters would support a statewide Children's Movement of Florida to promote quality services for children and families, compared to 61 percent before the campaign began. Overwhelming majorities existed across the political spectrum – Democrats, Republicans and independents.**

There will be a campaign this year to promote quality services for children and families. It will be called **The Children's Movement of Florida**.
Would you be supportive of this campaign?

By Party



(The before and after polls were based on surveys of 800 registered voters of Palm Beach County. The interviews were conducted by telephone from April 12 to April 16 and from May 18 to May 24 of 2010. Respondents were chosen at random from the complete list of Palm Beach registered voters, a different group for each poll. The margin of error of both polls was 3.5 percentage points. The questionnaire, the sample design, the interviews and the data collection process were designed and supervised by Bendixen & Amadi of Coral Gables, Fla., and the Tarrance Group of Alexandria, Va.)

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

In the end, the results of The Children's Project of Palm Beach validated the strategic approach and will help organizers sharpen their focus during a statewide campaign, especially when it comes to resource allocation and fine-tuning of the message.

"We had to show that the messages that worked in the 2009 focus groups and the statewide poll actually worked with people in the real world, which is where the media campaign came in," Bendixen said. "And we had to show that we could truly interest and energize people to get involved, which is why the 35 meetings were such an important part of our project."

When it comes to resource allocation, comparative media penetration figures were particularly instructive. Fifty-one percent of the survey's respondents recalled seeing at least one of the television commercials, but only 5 percent recalled seeing any of the advertisements in the Palm Beach Post, a dramatic illustration of the recent and continuing decline in newspaper circulation and influence.

On another front, comments and concerns expressed during many of the community and neighborhood events in Palm Beach County suggest that moderators of similar events conducted during a statewide campaign:

- Should express in clear terms that no tax dollars are being spent by the campaign.
- Should also make it clear that no new taxes or tax increases are being suggested as part of The Children's Movement of Florida.
- Should be ready for questions about the reallocation of resources required to elevate the priority placed on children's issues and the funds allocated to children's programs. The suggested approach: It is up to citizens to express their priorities and it is up to legislators to figure out how to achieve them.

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

Call to action

"I learned a lot during the presentation and I thought I already knew a lot about what was going on. We really need to make our children a priority."

– Anne Chernin, executive director, Homeless Coalition of Palm Beach County

The need is great. The populace is ready. The time is at hand.

The Children's Project of Palm Beach demonstrates that awareness of the state's shortcomings and support for a movement intended to make children's issues the state's highest priority can be developed and amplified through a nonpartisan, statewide media and public-event campaign.

The opportunity exists to create skill-building programs for parents, access to quality health care for children, screening and treatment programs for special-needs children, stimulating child-care centers, quality pre-kindergarten opportunities, and high-quality mentoring programs.

This will require effort and commitment and, perhaps, some sacrifice. And also patience.

"A movement is not one session of the Legislature or one vote in November," Lawrence said. "It's long term, making steady progress so children are much more of a front and center priority."

But the moment to begin has arrived.

"People are willing to do things for other people's children, partly because they're good people, partly because they want a safe and secure community," Lawrence said.

"The polling shows it can be done," he said. "Now, it's up to us to get it done."

Appendix A

The 11 Prominent Floridians Who Helped Plan This Project

- Modesto Abety, president and CEO of The Children's Trust of Miami-Dade County.
- Tana Ebbole, chief executive officer of the Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County.
- Ted Granger, president of The United Way of Florida.
- Dorothy Inman-Johnson, one of Tallahassee's best known citizens and leader of the Community Action Agency there.
- Luanne Panacek, chief executive officer of the Children's Board of Hillsborough County and chair of The Policy Group for Florida's Families and Children.
- Dr. Donald Pemberton, director of the Lastinger Center for Learning at the University of Florida in Gainesville.
- Diana Ragbeer, who leads communications and public affairs for The Children's Trust in Miami.
- Dr. Judith Schaechter, a pediatrician with a faculty appointment at the University of Miami and a member of the Governor's Children's Cabinet.
- Ana Sejeck, chief operating officer of The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation in Miami.
- Ruth Shack, president emeritus of Dade Community Foundation and a former county commissioner.
- Dr. Abigail Thorman, a nationally known early childhood consultant now living in Miami.

Appendix B

The Children's Movement of Florida Steering Committee

Carol Jenkins Barnett

President and board chair, Publix Super Markets Charities.
Tampa

Sam Bell

Former legislator, now principal in a lobbying firm.
Tallahassee

Allan Bense

Former House Speaker, now partner with GAC Contractors.
Panama City

Cecilia Bryant, Esq.

Former vice chair of the State University System Board of Regents and daughter of former Florida Gov. Farris Bryant.
Jacksonville

Bob Butterworth

Attorney and former attorney general and secretary of the Department of Children and Families.
Fort Lauderdale

Marta Casas-Celaya

Director of government and community affairs for Comcast.
West Palm Beach

Betty Castor

Former legislator, state education commissioner and president of the University of South Florida.
Tampa

Scott Clemons

Former legislator, now mayor of Panama City.
Panama City

Manny Diaz

An attorney twice elected mayor of Miami and former president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.
Miami

Pegeen Hanrahan

Former mayor of Gainesville.
Gainesville

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

Kathryn Hensley

School Board member in St. Lucie County.
Fort Pierce

Ed Jennings

Former legislator from Alachua County, now HUD regional administrator.
Gainesville

Toni Jennings

Construction company executive in Orange County and former lieutenant governor.
Orlando

Greg Langowski

Executive director, Republican Party of Palm Beach County.
West Palm Beach

David Lawrence Jr.

President of The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation and "University Scholar for Early Childhood Development and Readiness at the University of Florida.
Miami

Roberto Martinez

Former U.S. attorney, now a member of the State Board of Education.
Coral Gables

Gepsie Metellus

A major civic leader in Miami and executive director of the Sant La Neighborhood Center with a special focus on Haitian-American needs.
Miami

Jon Mills

Former law school dean at the University of Florida and former State House Speaker.
Gainesville

Sandra Murman

Former legislator from Hillsborough County, now a government relations consultant.
Tampa

John "Q" Quinones

Former Republican House member and now a member of the Osceola Board of County Commissioners.
Kissimmee

Nan Rich

State senator representing Broward and Miami-Dade.
Sunrise

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

Mario Rubio

Health care consultant.
Jacksonville

Burt Saunders

Attorney and former legislator from Collier County.
Naples

H.T. Smith, Esq.

Community leader in Miami-Dade. Former president of the National Bar Association.
Miami

Bill Sublette

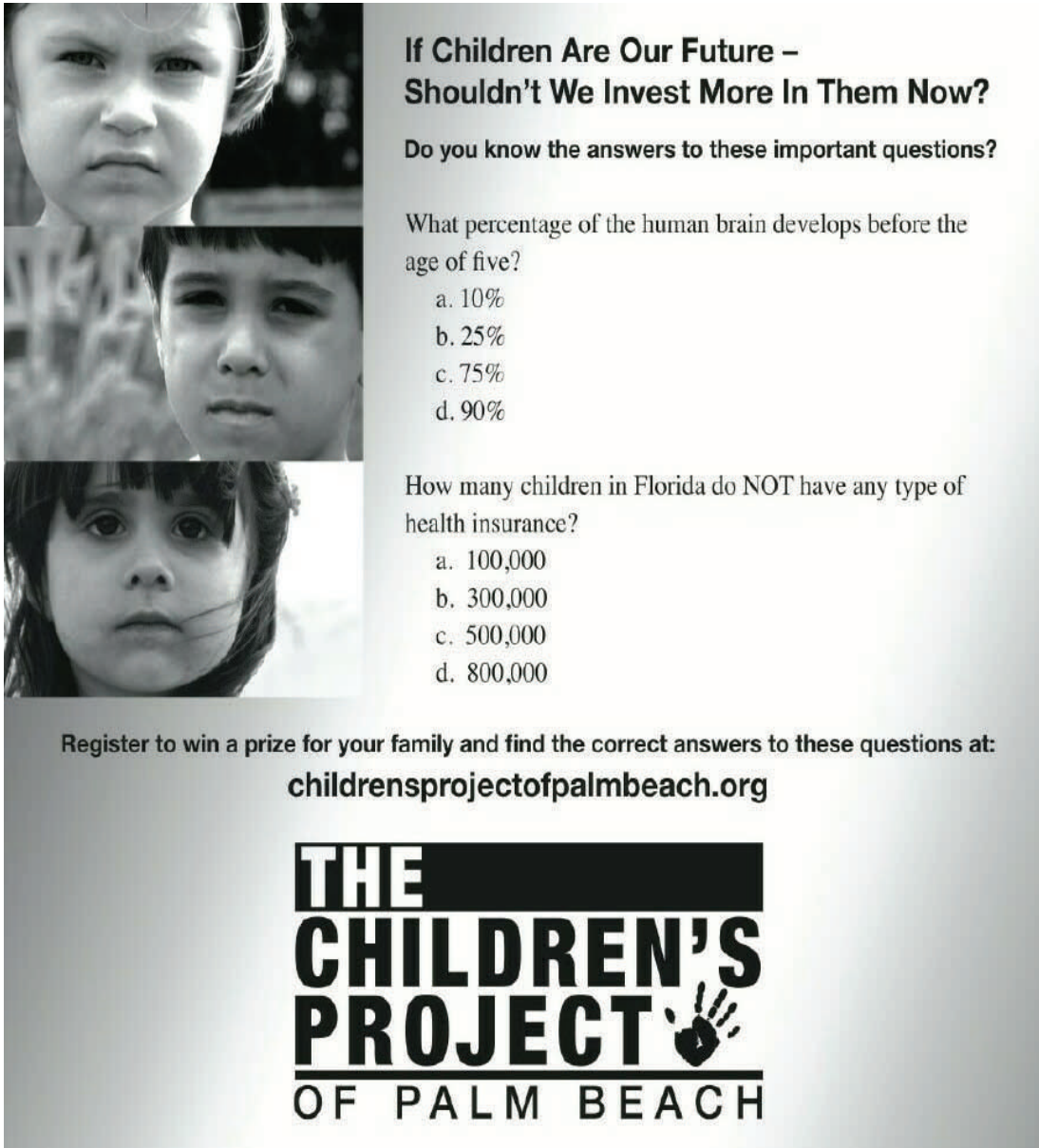
Attorney and former legislator from Orange County.
Orlando

Margaret Tidmore

Alternative school mentor program coordinator.
Panama City

Appendix C

Representative Newspaper Ad



**If Children Are Our Future –
Shouldn't We Invest More In Them Now?**

Do you know the answers to these important questions?


What percentage of the human brain develops before the age of five?

- a. 10%
- b. 25%
- c. 75%
- d. 90%

How many children in Florida do NOT have any type of health insurance?

- a. 100,000
- b. 300,000
- c. 500,000
- d. 800,000

Register to win a prize for your family and find the correct answers to these questions at:
childrensprojectofpalmbeach.org

THE
CHILDREN'S
PROJECT 
OF PALM BEACH

Appendix D

Television and Newspaper Media Buy

TV – April 19 thru May 18

WPBF ABC 25
Spots: 134

Early News, Prime Access, Primetime, Late News, Late Fringe

Earned Media
40x :30-sec Overnight hours

WPEC CBS 12
Spots: 96

Early Morning, Daytime, Noon News, Early News, Primetime, Late News

Earned Media

- Tell Us More – Link to The Children's Project of Palm Beach website
- :30-sec Spot on cbs12.com

2.5-min Video on cbs12.com

WFLX FOX 29
Spots: 358

Daytime, Early Fringe, Prime Access, Primetime, Late News, Late Fringe, Weekend

Earned Media

- 16x :15-sec Bonus
- 4x :05-sec Prime BB

Frequency discount

WPTV NBC 5
Spots: 176

Early Morning, Daytime, Early News, Prime Access, Primetime, Late News, Late Fringe

Earned Media
120x :30-sec Bonus on WPWX Local 24 Hour Weather Channel

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

Print

The Palm Beach Post
Insertions: 9

3x Half Page, B/W in Local News on Tues – 4/20, 4/27, 5/4

5x Half Page, B/W in Local News on either Thurs, Fri, Sat – 4/23, 4/29, 5/1, 5/6 and
5/7

1x Half Page, B/W in Local News on Sunday – 5/2

Appendix E

PALM BEACH COUNTY SPEAKER EVENTS

May 5 – Wednesday

West Riviera School Advisory Meeting
Riviera Beach
60 people expected/attended
Speaker: Kerline Boursiquot
Organizer: Leslie Barkett

May 10 – Monday

Bridges Beacon Center – parents and staff
Lake Worth
35 people expected/attended
Speaker: Susan Vodicka
Organizer: Kerline Boursiquot

May 11 - Tuesday

Success For Kids (and Boca Raton Mayor Susan Welchel)
Woodfield Country Club, Boca Raton
50 people expected/attended
Speaker: Dave Lawrence
Organizer: Theresa Amandi

May 11 - Tuesday

Spirit of Giving Network @ The Junior League of Boca Raton
40 people expected/attended
Speaker: David Lawrence
Organizer: Leslie Barkett

May 11 – Tuesday

Early Childhood Cabinet meeting – Palm Beach County
Boynton Beach
30 people expected/attended
Speaker/organizer: Theresa Amandi

May 11 – Tuesday

Republican Club of Palm Beaches
Bear Lakes Country Club
West Palm Beach
25 people expected/attended
Speaker: Bob Martinez
Organizer: John Knight

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

May 13 – Thursday

Human Services Coalition of Palm Beach County
United Methodist Church, West Palm Beach
15 people expected/attended
Speakers: Lawton "Bud" Chiles and Susan Vodicka
Organizer: David Abrams

May 13 – Thursday

Highland Elementary School – Bridges Beacon
Lake Worth
40 people expected/attended
Speaker: Kathryn Hensley
Organizer: Kerline Boursiquot

May 13 – Thursday

Forest Park Elementary - Kindergarten Round-Up
90 people expected/attended
Speakers: Margaret Tidmore and Susan Vodicka
Organizer: Marlena Hasday

May 14 – Friday

Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County
Palm Beach Post in West Palm Beach
35 people expected/attended
Speaker: Susan Vodicka
Organizer: Marlena Hasday

May 14 – Friday

Palm Healthcare Foundation
The Palm Healthcare Pavilion, West Palm Beach
30 people expected/attended
Speaker: Dave Lawrence
Organizer: Leslie Barkett

May 15 - Saturday

Family Central Belle Glade (family and childcare providers)
Belle Glade
40 people expected/attended
Speakers: Margaret Tidmore and Susan Vodicka
Organizers: Kerline Boursiquot and Susan Vodicka

May 15 – Saturday

North End Coalition of Neighborhoods
Union Missionary Baptist Church – West Palm Beach
75 people expected/attended
Speaker: Kathryn Hensley
Organizer: John Knight

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

May 16 – Sunday

Vizcaya Condominium Clubhouse (retired seniors)
Delray Beach
105 people expected/attended
Speaker: Dave Lawrence
Organizer: David Abrams

May 17 - Monday

Family Central (meeting 1)
West Palm Beach
30 people expected/attended
Speaker: Susan Vodicka
Organizer: Kerline Boursiquot

May 17 - Monday

Family Central (meeting 2)
West Palm Beach
25 people expected/attended
Speaker: Susan Vodicka
Organizer: Kerline Boursiquot

May 17 - Monday

Family Central (meeting 3)
West Palm Beach
35 people expected/attended
Speaker: Susan Vodicka
Organizer: Kerline Boursiquot

May 17 - Monday

House party (informal focus group)
Private Home, Delray Beach
25 people expected/attended
Speaker: Susan Vodicka
Organizer: John Knight

May 18 - Tuesday

Family Central (meeting 4)
West Palm Beach
85 people expected/attended
Speaker: Susan Vodicka
Organizer: Kerline Boursiquot

May 19 - Wednesday

Children's Home Society Beacon Center – “Celebration Night”
Northmore Elementary, West Palm Beach
45 people expected/attended
Speaker: Kathryn Hensley
Organizers: Marlana Hasday/Kerline Boursiquot

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

May 19 – Wednesday

Pioneer Beacon Center, Belle Glade
Tri-City Event (South Bay, Belle Glade and Pahokee)
City of South Bay, Commission Chambers
75 people expected/attended
Speaker: Susan Vodicka
Organizer: Kerline Boursiquot

May 20 - Thursday

United Way of Palm Beach County – Board Meeting
Boynton Beach
35 people expected/attended
Speaker: Susan Vodicka
Organizer: John Knight

May 20 - Thursday

Barton Community Center/For the Children
Lake Worth
105 people expected/attended
Speaker: Susan Vodicka
Organizer: Kerline Boursiquot

May 21 - Friday

Area Agency on Aging/Monthly board meeting
West Palm Beach
40 people expected/attended
Speaker: Theresa Amandi
Organize: Marlana Hasday

May 21 – Friday

Planned Parenthood Education Training Day
West Palm Beach
35 people expected/attended
Speaker: Susan Vodicka
Organizer: Leslie Barkett

May 23 - Sunday

House party (informal focus group)
Palm Beach Gardens
10 people expected/attended
Speaker: Dave Lawrence
Organizer: Kerline Boursiquot

The Children's Project of Palm Beach

May 26 - Wednesday

Department of Health Palm Beach County
Executive Leadership Training Meeting
West Palm Beach
70 people expected/attended
Speaker: Susan Vodicka
Organizer: Marlena Hasday

May 27 – Thursday

TD Bank and Community Partnerships
North Palm Beach
35 people expected/attended
Speaker: Theresa Amandi
Organizer: Leslie Barkett/Theresa Amandi

