



Grail Family Services

Empowering San José families

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Grail Family Services Brings National Early Literacy Initiative to Bay Area

Grail Family Services, in collaboration with the Unity Council in Oakland, will be bringing the *Lee y serás* (Read and you will be) Early Literacy Initiative for Latino families to the Bay Area this

National Council of La Raza, the nation's largest Hispanic advocacy organization; and Verizon, one of the world's leading providers of communications services. *Lee y serás* is designed to empower and support Latino

Lee y serás is designed to empower and support Latino parents and other family members as their children's first and most important teachers and role models

year. *Lee y serás* is a multi-year initiative designed to help families and communities support the reading and literacy development of Latino children by focusing on the inherent strengths of Latino families and communities.

The initiative is led nationally by Scholastic, the global children's publishing and media company;

parents and other family members as their children's first and most important teachers and role models, to provide caregivers, educators, and other community members who work with Latino families the resources and tools they need to help create literacy-rich environments for Latino children, and to offer policymakers, business, and community leaders the information and tools necessary to understand and address the early literacy needs of their communities.

Recognizing the complexity of addressing the low literacy levels of Latino children, the *Lee y serás* initiative has developed a multi-pronged approach that uses culturally sensitive, research-based curricula targeting family members, day care providers, and community leaders. GFS's role will be to train 60 service providers in San Jose and Oakland on the use of the parent/family workshops curriculum. Starting this summer, providers involved in this project will attend a two-day training and receive all needed materials. The families they serve will receive books and a visit from Scholastic's Family Literacy Caravan.



A father models reading in front of his son, one of the suggested activities that are part of the *Lee y serás* Early Literacy Initiative.

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Grail Family Services fosters learning and the empowerment of low-income families in San José's multicultural neighborhoods through the delivery of programs that educate, develop leadership skills, and build a sense of community.

GFS Presents its Work at the National Family Literacy Conference

In mid-March Grail Family Services was honored to present our work at the National Family Literacy Conference in Kentucky hosted by the National Center for Family Literacy. The presentation focused on helping service providers successfully involve Latino parents in creating literate communities. An interactive workshop highlighted three successful strategies to address this crisis.

One strategy was Scholastic's national *Lee y serás* early

literacy initiative. A second strategy was an early literacy program involving parents and children together implemented successfully by GFS. The third strategy was a hands-on approach using story telling as a vehicle for engaging Latino parents in becoming active participants in their children's learning experiences. GFS was very excited to have this opportunity to share our work with other service providers across the country.

Many Thanks to Our Supporters

Our many generous supporters make it possible to provide quality services for families with young children. Special thanks to the following:

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- Grail of California
- Severns Family Foundation

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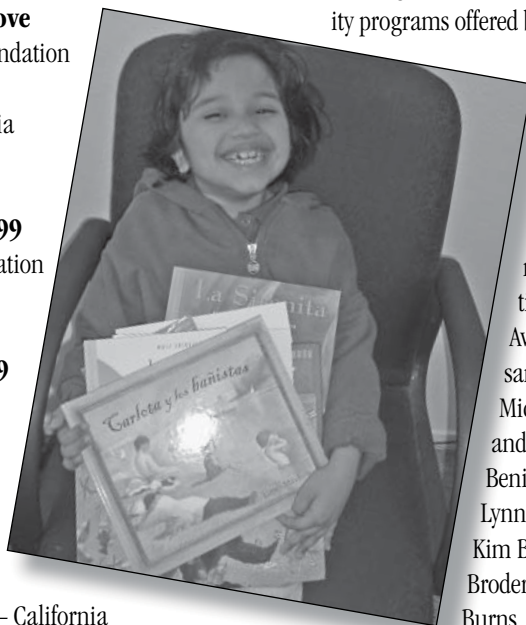
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Please let us know if we have omitted any names or made any errors on our donor list.

- Scholastic
- Wilson, Sonsini, Goodrich & Rosati

Individual Donors

Thanks to all the following individual donors for their generous contributions to the quality programs offered by GFS:



Ann, Anonymous (5), Janis and Heather, Rob and Ronnie Adams, Kathleen Armormino, Henry Armstrong, Hilda and Reynaldo Arellano in memory of John Augustine, Consuelo and Carlos Avitia, Sonia Avitia, Susan Becker,

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Robert L. Severns Children's Library at GFS Opens to the Public

Early November of last year the Robert L. Severns Children's Library at Grail Family Services finally opened its doors to residents of East San José. The vision for the library is to provide every child in the Mayfair community with access to high quality children's books that will enrich and support their literacy experiences at home and in school.

The library offers families and their children, ages 0-9, a wide variety of programs

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For one-third of the parents, visiting the Children's Library was their first ever experience with a library. 22% of families indicate that they have no books in their homes.

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that promote literacy skills and a love of reading. Programs include a toddler technology center, Family Story Hour, the *Léeme* (Read to me) Early Literacy Program for parents and pre-school aged children, and the *Lee y serás* (Read and you will be) parent workshops. Families may also check out books from our collection through the library's Book Lending program. Additionally, housed in the library is a satellite branch of the PlaneTree Health Library which provides health resources for adults.

To date the library has served 265 children. Ninety-three library cards have been issued and 680 books have been checked out. Children, parents and local teachers are truly enjoying this new resource in the community. Statistics collected from families who have received library cards reveal the important role the library is playing in the lives of the families served. For one-third of the parents, visiting the Children's Library was their first ever experience with a library. Thirty-four percent of the families report having less than 10 books in their homes, and 22% of families indicate that they have no books in their homes. These statistics demonstrate the important role the library plays in the lives of the families we serve.

Another way we are making the library accessible to families is by coordinating with local public schools to have classrooms visit the library on field trips. We have had several trips so far and children, parents and teachers have enjoyed the experience. If you have any questions about the Children's Library or would like to volunteer, please contact Family Literacy Specialist Yenda Prado at (408) 347-7892.



Families enjoy the many services and opportunities offered through the Robert L. Severns Children's Library at Grail Family Services.

GFS Welcomes New Board and Staff Members

GFS has had the pleasure of welcoming six new board members to our organization in the last few months.

Sonia Avitia, a longtime community resident, is the Sales Director for Mary Kay Cosmetics. She formerly worked for Senator John Vasconcellos, Supervisor Blanca Alvarado, and Mayor Ron Gonzalez.

Edgardo Cabrales, an East San Jose resident, is the owner of a maintenance business.

Wendy Lovetro, GFS's new Vice Chair, is the Regional Sales Director for Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and Bungalows.

David Okazaki is the Vice President & Relationship Manager at Manufacturers Bank in San Jose.

Duane Welsch, a retired senior administrative analyst and Grail member, has rejoined the board after a brief hiatus.

In addition to new board members, GFS has also welcomed two new staff members to the agency.

Brenda Arenas, a longtime community resident, has taken on the position of Lead Child Care Coordinator. She also does additional duties facilitating our Family Story Hour program through the Children's Library.

Yenda Prado is GFS's new Family Literacy Specialist, in charge of the Children's Library and literacy programs. Prior to GFS, Yenda worked for Project Read, an adult literacy program, and earned her Master of Education in Language and Literacy from Harvard University.

GFS is honored to have such a talented and committed group of individuals support the work of the organization.

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Another important component of the *Lee y serás* initiative is to create awareness of this issue among community leaders and other stakeholders, and to engage them in an open dialogue. When faced with information published by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics indicating that only 14% of Latino fourth graders and 9% of Latino eighth graders read at the proficient level or above, most people feel compelled to take action.

GFS, in collaboration with Scholastic, the City of San José, and Community Foundation Silicon Valley will convene a city-wide dialogue in September. This dialogue will be an opportunity to create awareness around this crisis and to mobilize individuals to take action and become involved in de-

veloping solutions to address Latino literacy levels. If you are interested in being involved with this dialogue or in being an implementation site for the *Lee y serás* parent/family workshops, please contact Family Literacy Specialist Yenda Prado at (408) 347-7892.



Children enter the Scholastic Family Literacy Caravan, a component of the *Lee y serás* initiative designed to create awareness in the community. The Caravan will be responsible for distributing books to families.

Your Support Is Needed

GFS relies on donations to sustain its programs. Your support is vital! Please consider making a donation today. Visit www.gfsfamilyservices.org and click on "Support Us".

GFS also relies on volunteers to provide high-quality programs for families. Please see our current volunteer offerings by visiting www.gfsfamilyservices.org and clicking on "Get Involved."



Attention Book Clubs!

The Robert L. Severns Children's Library at GFS is available for book clubs to host their monthly meetings. If your book club would like to use our space, please contact Director of Operations Anne Dunham at (408) 347-7892.



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