Report from Commission Staff
May 15, 2025

1. Administrative Updates

F5VC named one of the "Best Places to Work on the Central Coast"

- F5VC is proud to once again be recognized as one of the "Best Places to Work on the Central Coast" by the Pacific Coast Business Times.
    - This honor reflects our commitment to being an employee-centric, business-minded organization.
    - Publication date is May 23, 2025
- F5VC is committed to designing family-friendly workplace policies and encourages all employers to do the same.

2. Updates on Commission Initiatives

Early Childhood Programs – ECP (NfL, Help Me Grow, and Welcome Every Baby)

- Parent Education and Engagement
    - Topics focused on school readiness including learning about Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and preschool options.
- Community Outreach and Collaboration
    - Over 100 participants joined Earth Day celebrations at Moorpark and El Rio NfL sites with F5VC Parent Leaders supporting the El Rio event.
        - Activities included learning how to use recycled materials, planting, making sensory bottles, a clothes swap, and signing up for library cards.
    - Other events include a Social Connections Walk for families and their infants at College Park in Oxnard and Family Springtime Picnic with The Very Hungry Caterpillar at Arroyo Verde Park in Ventura from 11-1pm on May 16th.
- Fatherhood Initiative
    - The second annual Fatherhood Summit was held on April 26th.
        - There were over 100 attendees, with 91 fathers attending.
    - Attendees were able to join father-focused workshops that were provided in English, Spanish, and Mixteco. The day included amazing food and prizes.

MediCal/CalAIM Updates

- HIPAA Privacy and Security Assessment
    - Intrepid Ascent Inc. has conducted key informant/group interviews with 13 First 5 Ventura staff, as well as with our external IT provider.

        - In conjunction, F5VC administered a privacy and security survey to 45 staff, of which 40 responded.
    - The information from surveys and interviews will be used to inform upcoming recommendations around best practices in privacy and security, in compliance with CalAIM and HIPAA requirements.
- Community Health Workers (CHW) - Standing Recommendation
    - Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) has issued a standing recommendation that all Medi-Cal members who are eligible for CHW services can receive them without a written recommendation from a physician or other licensed practitioner for the first 6 hours of service.
    - This was an implementation barrier for First 5s and other community organizations that do not typically have access to a physician or other licensed practitioner within their programs.

<u>Community Investment Loan Fund</u>

- The Economic Development Collaborative (EDC) is contracted by the Commission to manage its Loan Fund, which is a $1.3 million revolving fund providing low-cost financing for preschool and child care facilities development, including planning, construction, and amortizing loans.
- The EDC loan board approved a new loan for "The Little Blue Creche"**,** a new preschool and child care facility in Ventura.
    - This loan combines three sources of funding from First 5 Ventura County, the City of Ventura and EDC.
        - F5VCs portion of $175,120 will cover costs such as facility renovations, permitting and inspections, outdoor classrooms, playground equipment and safety surfaces, and preschool furniture, equipment, and materials.
- The new facility is projected to create 36 spaces serving infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children.
    - A co-working space, funded by co-lenders, will be available for parents of enrolled children and breastfeeding mothers.

<u>Advocacy</u>

- F5VC hosts diaper distribution events made possible through a partnership with FoodShare.
    - FoodShare is a member of the California Association of Diaper Banks (CADB) and is advocating for continued funding for the diaper program.
- F5VC signed on to a letter supporting the funding request, as the diaper program directly benefits the families served by F5VC, promoting health and well-being.

<u>Take 5 and Read to Kids! Media coverage – see attached</u>

- Media coverage received for Take 5 and Read to Kids! early childhood literacy campaign includes: NPR/KCLU Radio story, Amigos805, VC Reporter - Happenings section, and VC Star article.

3. County, Regional, National Updates

California State Budget May Revise

- Governor Newsom released his State Budget May Revise, citing a $12 billion deficit.
    - Commitment to more child care slots, rate increases, and funding for the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Aware program.
    - Cuts to continuous Medi-Cal enrollment for children 0-5 and freezes Medi-Cal enrollment for undocumented adults.
- See attached press release from First 5 Association.

First 5 California (F5CA)

- First 5 California Commission established a $3 million fund to support county commissions' capacity building and long-term sustainability efforts, called the Resilience Initiative.
- F5CA and F5 Association are co-hosting a series of calls to solicit feedback that informs a package of perspectives and recommendations to the First 5 California Commission on how to invest the Resilience Initiative funds.

AmeriCorps cuts impact First 5 programs

- Federal cuts eliminated thousands of AmeriCorps positions, including many in California.
    - AmeriCorps members, often part of the early-childhood workforce of First 5 funded programs, provide developmental screenings in rural counties, home-visiting in Sacramento, staff family resource centers, and provide critical links to food, health, and housing supports.

4. Upcoming Events

First 5 Committees

- Administration / Finance Committee Meeting - Friday, June 6, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Local News

California Coast News

A lawmaker and a law enforcer join together to promote early childhood literacy in Ventura County

KCLU | By Caroline Feraday
Published May 2, 2025 at 3:49 PM PDT

LISTEN • 3:50

Caroline Feraday / KCLU

Ventura County Sheriff Jim Fryhoff (at left) and Democratic Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin of Thousand Oaks read to children as part of First 5's *Take 5 and Read to Kids!* campaign.

An annual campaign to promote early childhood literacy kicked off in Ventura County with two local celebrities reading bilingual books to young children.

Ventura County Sheriff Jim Fryhoff is reading in Spanish, alongside Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin, to children under the age of five at Ruben Castro Center in Moorpark.

It's part of a bigger **First 5 Ventura** campaign called ***Take 5 and Read to Kids!*** to help raise awareness about the importance of early childhood literacy for the more than 55,000 children in Ventura County. Fryhoff said reading to young children is important to set them up for success.

"In the first few years, children are learning to read. After that, they're reading to learn. So if they don't know how to read, they're going to be missing out after about fourth grade on," said Fryhoff. "So it's really important to have that early childhood literacy, to make sure families are reading books to their children routinely, to make it a habit every day to read a book to your children so that they set them up for success for the future."

Fryhoff added that it's also a good way to build positive relationships between law enforcement and families.

"They need to know they can come to us for help, that we're here to protect them," he said.

At a time when many federally funded early education programs are threatened by closure, Democratic Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin of Thousand Oaks said that it's critical to expose children to language so they are ready when they go to school.

"It is critically important to have high-quality early education programs so that everybody can start at the starting line when they start their kindergarten year, so it's absolutely appalling to hear that there might be cuts in these very, very critical early education programs," said Irwin.

First 5 is funded at a state level—actually by the tax on tobacco—and Lysa Urban from First 5 Ventura County said investing in the first five years of a child's life is critical for their social, emotional and learning skills.

"We know that 90% of a child's brain develops before age five. So that's the ideal and best time to make sure we talk, read, and sing with children from birth to age five when they head to kindergarten," said Urban.

"If you will read to them a minimum of five minutes a day, they will have heard 300,000 more words by the time they start kindergarten. And while we are not being directly impacted by the federal cuts, we are impacted by the families that we serve collaboratively, which means that First Five will be working even more so with the same limited resources to support the families throughout Ventura County," she said.

Members of the public with children age 5 and younger are invited to attend *Take 5 and Read to Kids!* storytimes with a celebrity reader at select First 5 Ventura County Neighborhoods for Learning (NfL) sites as well as local libraries during their regularly scheduled storytimes:

- Rio Plaza Elementary (NfL classroom), 3300 Cortez St., Oxnard, May 2 at 9:30 a.m.
- Ruben Castro Center (NfL classroom), 612 B. Spring Rd. Suite 401, Moorpark, May 2 at 9:30 a.m.
- Sespe Elementary (NfL classroom), 627 Sespe Ave., Fillmore, May 2 at 9:30 a.m.
- E.P. Foster Library on Monday, May 5 at 10:30 a.m.
- Port Hueneme Ray D. Prueter Library on Tuesday, May 6 at 10:30 a.m.
- Fillmore Library on Wednesday, May 7 at 10:30 a.m.
- Hill Road Library on Wednesday, May 7 at 10:30 a.m.
- Ojai Library on Wednesday, May 7 at 10:30 a.m.
- Santa Paula Library/Blanchard Community Library on Wednesday, May 7 at 10:30 a.m.
- Thousand Oaks Brimhall Library on Thursday, May 8 at 10:15 a.m.
- Camarillo Library on Thursday, May 8 at 10:30 a.m.

Link: A lawmaker and a law enforcer join together to promote early childhood literacy in Ventura County | KCLU

Amigos805
Bringing cultures together by sharing information

CULTURAL, EDUCATION, FAMILY, LOCAL, NEWS, YOUTH

Celebrity Readers in Ventura County will Take 5 and Read to Kids! starting May 2

by Community Contributor • April 30, 2025 • Comments Off

Celina Zacarias reading to children, Take 5 and Read to Kids! event. Courtesy photos.

First 5 Ventura County to Host Early Literacy Campaign with Free Reading Events for Families Countywide

VENTURA COUNTY — The ninth annual **Take 5 and Read to Kids!** campaign will kick-off May 2nd at preschools, childcare centers, and public libraries throughout Ventura County. First 5 Ventura County hosts these free community events to help raise awareness about the importance of early childhood literacy for the more than 55,000 children in Ventura County who are age 5 and younger. For more information, visit www.first5ventura.org/talk-read-sing

More than 60 local celebrity readers will be reading bilingual books to young children. This year's impressive line-up of readers includes Congresswoman Julia Brownley, Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin, Supervisors Kelly Long and Janice Parvin, County Executive Officer Dr. Sevet Johnson, Ventura County Sheriff Jim Fryhoff, Ventura County Fire Chief Dustin Gardner, Mayors, CEOs, senior staff from Naval Base Ventura County and many others.

Members of the public with children age 5 and younger are invited to attend **Take 5 and Read to Kids!** storytimes with a celebrity reader at select First 5 Ventura County Neighborhoods for Learning (NfL) sites as well as local libraries during their regularly scheduled storytimes:

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"*We know that only about half the kids in Ventura County are read to every day. We also know that the more kids are exposed to language, to books, to letters – by talking, reading singing – in the home, the better prepared they are when they get to school*," said Petra Puls, Executive Director at First 5 Ventura County. Each child who attends a **Take 5 and Read to Kids!**storytime event will be gifted with a bilingual book to help build their home library.

Celina Zacarias, who was elected as the first Latina woman to serve as president of the Oxnard Harbor District, participated as a celebrity reader at a preschool in Oxnard. "*I grew up in this neighborhood… I really want the kids to know there are other people who support, love, and encourage them to succeed. The kids need a role model*," shared Zacarias.

Ventura County Fire Chief Dustin Gardner said the reading events are so much more than an opportunity to hear a story being read. It's also a chance to break down barriers in the community.

About First 5 Ventura County, www.first5ventura.org
Brain research shows that the prenatal period and first five years of a child's life are critical for developing lifelong social, emotional, and learning skills. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 (a tobacco tax) in 1998 which established First 5 county commissions throughout the state to improve health and education programs for children prenatal to 5 years.

For more than 25 years, First 5 Ventura County's investment, expertise and leadership have made a significant, positive impact on early childhood in our community. F5VC's early education and childhood development programs – Neighborhoods for Learning and Help Me Grow – strengthen families and help ensure Ventura County's 55,000 children age 5 and younger reach their full potential.

Tags: Celebrity Readers | First 5 Ventura County | Ventura County

Link: Celebrity Readers in Ventura County will Take 5 and Read to Kids! starting May 2 – Amigos805.com

Happenings: Week of 5/1/2025

May 1, 2025

TAKE 5 AND READ TO KIDS! | 9:30 a.m. The ninth annual Take 5 and Read to Kids! campaign will kick-off May 2 at preschools, child care centers and public libraries throughout Ventura County. First 5 Ventura County hosts these free community events to help raise awareness about the importance of early childhood literacy for the more than 55,000 children in Ventura County who are age 5 and younger. More than 60 local celebrity readers will be reading bilingual books to young children. This year's impressive line-up of readers includes Congresswoman Julia Brownley, Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin, Supervisors Kelly Long and Janice Parvin, County Executive Officer Dr. Sevet Johnson and many others. May 2 locations include Rio Plaza Elementary in Oxnard, Ruben Castro Center in Moorpark and Sespe Elementary in Fillmore. For more information, visit www.first5ventura.org/talk-read-sing.

Link: Happenings: Week of 5/1/2025 | Calendar | vcreporter.com

VC Star.

LOCAL

Ojai library story time gets surprise guest speaker as part of literacy campaign

Ernesto Centeno Araujo
Ventura County Star

May 8, 2025, 12:38 p.m. PT

The Ojai Public Library held its weekly story time May 7 with a special guest reader as part of First 5 Ventura County's ninth annual early literacy campaign.

Lifelong Ojai resident and Chumash elder Julie Tumamait-Stenslie was invited to the library late morning where about 30 children and more than 20 adults sat in a semicircle to listen to her read "Maria had a Little Llama" and "The Feelings Book." She also recited a Chumash folktale of how coyotes got their howl.

Tumamait-Stenslie was one of more than 60 guest readers, such as elected officials and local celebrities, who read to children in libraries, preschools and Head Start programs. The initiative took place from May 2 to May 8.

Tumamait-Stenslie is a member of the local Chumash tribe and has been involved in social justice issues throughout the county. She, along with her family, have lived in Ojai for generations and was glad to have been to participate in the reading campaign.

"I haven't read to kids this young before," Tumamait-Stenslie said. "Reading to them in these early stages is so important."

She also thought it was important that children learn at an early age to interact with nature, pointing to a necklace around her neck adorned with acorns that she said often sticks with children.

The campaign aims to cultivate literacy for children under 5 years old through a series of readings at venues across the region, said Lysa Urban, a spokesperson for First 5 Ventura County.

Ojai parents who regularly participate in the weekly story time received a welcome surprise when Tumamait-Stenslie sat in her traditional Chumash regalia ready to interact with the kids.

"I was not aware there was going to be a guest reader," said Ojai resident Lindsey Boubel, 36.

She normally brings her daughter, Marigold, 2, to the library's weekly story time. Many parents, like Boubel, were unaware of First 5's initiative but were glad to see the organization's involvement.

Participants were given an English and Spanish-language version of "Step It Up With My Pup!" to read with their children at home. In total, about 1,200 books will be handed out to families during the 2025 campaign.

First 5 California is a state initiative with 58 commissions in counties throughout California with the goal to foster early childhood health and education, Urban said.

Ernesto Centeno Araujo covers breaking news for the Ventura County Star. He can be reached at ecentenoaraujo@vcstar.com.

Link: [Chumash elder surprise guest reader at Ojai Public Library]