

**The Zonta Club - provides English as a Second Language Program at Brightest Horizons Child Care Center  
November 10, 2008**

As a part of an English as a Second Language (ESL) service program of the Zonta Club of Sanibel-Captiva, the Club has partnered with Brightest Horizons Child Care Center in Fort Myers to provide English language tutoring programs. Brightest Horizons serves the predominantly Hispanic Harlem Heights area of Fort Myers. Students come mostly from low-income households of working parents, 75% of whom are single women. Brightest Horizons received a grant from the Zonta Club in early 2008 to help improve the English skills of teachers whose first language is not English and to provide English tutoring to parents of children enrolled at Brightest Horizons. Young children in households where English is not spoken, but who receive English immersion in their pre-school programs are more likely to succeed when they enter the public schools. Further, parents who have the English language skills to assist children with their school work, increases their children's accomplishments in the primary grades.

In February, 12 teachers at Brightest Horizons were assessed for their English language ability and 10 Zonta members attended a day long literacy training session provided by Literacy Volunteers of Lee County (LVLC). From late February until mid June, the Brightest Horizons teachers were tutored by the Zonta club members. Each teacher received approximately 16 hours of instruction in reading, writing, listening, and speaking English. The tutoring of the teachers will continue from now into the first half of 2009. Brightest Horizons' Executive Director, Tina Parsons, recently commented, "This ESL program has given a great boost of confidence to the participating teachers. We feel it is very successful."

In an expansion of the program, a six week ESL program for parents of children enrolled in the Brightest Horizons child care program got underway on October 28. Twenty-two parents (20 women and two men) are enrolled and their English language proficiency has been assessed by Literacy Volunteers of Lee County (LVLC). Carolyn Gray, who recently retired from Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), is serving as lead teacher for this program with tutoring assistance from Zonta ESL team members. Four students and one staff member from FGCU are part of the Circle of Friends service program who have committed to contributing over 75 hours of service for this project between October 28 and December 16. If there is continued interest, efforts will be made to expand the parents program in 2009. Further training of Zontians by LVLC will be taking place November 15<sup>th</sup> in Cape Coral.

One of the primary reasons parents give for participating in this educational experience is to assist their children with school work. One woman commented, "I want to be able to read English books to my daughter." Language proficiency ranges from low beginner English proficiency up to a relatively high proficiency. The program is being held from 6:30-8:00 pm on Tuesday evenings. Zonta grant money

from the annual PEEK at the Unique fundraiser is being used to provide child care and snacks for children so the parents can attend the program. In addition, Zonta team members are helping to provide a light supper for the attendees.

Zonta International is a worldwide service organization of executives in business and the professions working together to advance the status of women and girls. Zontians volunteer their time, talents, and energy to local and international service projects to advance the status of women.

Submitted by Carolyn Gray and Cyndy Lorry

11/10/08

