In spite of the recession of 2009-2010, HIPPY continued to provide high quality services to over 2,099 children in Florida. This edition will highlight state office successes and parent testimonials submitted to us during the past year from local programs. Despite the budget cuts, we were able to forge partnerships with other programs and to serve families that were not traditionally served by HIPPY programs. We continued to increase the number of Migrant children receiving HIPPY services. We also piloted HIPPY in a transitional housing community and submitted a grant for funding to pilot HIPPY working with children with autism and other related disabilities. These pilots present enormous opportunities for research to examine how HIPPY may be used to promote the inclusion of children with developmental disabilities in the HIPPY community.

The Florida HIPPY State Office serves the second largest number of HIPPY children in the U.S., supports the only faith based program, and has the oldest HIPPY Program in the United States. It is our expectation that we will be able to report the findings from our longitudinal study that examined the impact HIPPY had on school success and FCAT performance in our summer edition. We believe that informing individuals in the public and private sectors about the impact that HIPPY has had on families will result in increased public awareness and support for expanding HIPPY in the state of Florida. We will continue to serve as advocates for families and link HIPPY to other home visiting programs that are family centered, and builds a strong partnership between providers and families.
HIPPY Research
Marsha Black, Ph. D., USF HIPPY Researcher

Our research agenda in 2011 includes findings that will show how the HIPPY program continues to achieve the goal of making a positive difference in the lives of parents and their children. We will study HIPPY’s long-term effects on children’s academic performance in public school. The Florida HIPPY Longitudinal Study will enter its sixth year with the seventh cohort of children entering kindergarten in September 2011. We are currently waiting for the school readiness and FCAT scores from the Florida Department of Education.

We are undertaking a new research initiative during Spring 2011. A parent involvement survey will be given to first time HIPPY parents by home visitors. The purpose of this new study is to compare levels of participation in home literacy and community educational activities of HIPPY parents with those of parents who were interviewed in 2007 for the National Household Education Study.

Florida HIPPY Gives $500,000 in Service to Local Communities
Brenda Brinson, Florida HIPPY AmeriCorps Coordinator

The value of volunteer time in the state of Florida is $18.20 per hour. HIPPY home visitors and parents donated 27,900.96 volunteer hours in 2009-2010. These volunteers understood and embraced their civic responsibilities by giving of themselves to improve the lives of others.

HIPPY home visitors participated in the AmeriCorps Project which is a national program designed to increase volunteerism among Americans. This initiative provides education awards to members who complete service hours in their communities. Thirty-two home visitors promoted early literacy through HIPPY and volunteered their time promoting education in their communities. These members completed 23,460 hours of service training parents, assisting in classrooms and public libraries. They also organized book drives, promoted healthy lifestyles and mentored children. They earned $69,414 in education awards. These funds may be used to pay for classes and/or pay off current student loans. Home visitors also recruited 275 HIPPY parents who completed 4,441 volunteer hours. Parents volunteered at local schools, churches, libraries, museums and in little league activities. They also participated in community clean-ups, health fairs and education expos.
At 58 years old, Godefrieda Alfred thought she was done raising children. But when the Palm Beach County woman’s only son killed himself in 2008, Alfred was faced with having to take care of the 2-year-old daughter he left behind. “Five days before she turned 2 years old, he took his own life,” Alfred said. “The mother could not seem to get clean and sober. [The Department of Children and Families] thought it was best to give me legal guardianship of Skylar.”

Rather than seeing it as a burden, Alfred said she thinks of raising Skylar as a second opportunity. Thanks to the Center for Family Services’ HIPPY program she said this time she gets to do it right.

“That’s the part that breaks my heart,” Alfred said. “I have all this knowledge now. Back then I wasn’t aware of any of these agencies.” HIPPY, which means Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters, is a home-based program where parents learn the skills to ready their 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children to succeed in school.

“The idea is to empower parents and guardians to be their children’s first teachers and create an educational environment in the home that promotes literacy and bonding,” said program coordinator, Mary Rodriguez of the Center for Family Services. Rodriguez said the program provides an alternative to daycare and preschool where parents learn the skills to ready their 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children to succeed in school.

“On top of taking care of Skylar, who has a speech impediment because of neglect as an infant, Alfred cares for her husband, a Vietnam veteran with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the beginnings of dementia. Alfred herself is not without physical hurdles. When she had breast cancer and a breast removed in 1997, another surgery to remove a piece of muscle from her stomach area to reconstruct her breast left her with a surgical hernia. “I know some people would say, ‘You must be tired,’ but I feel this is a gift,” she said of the time she spends teaching Skylar. “I feel like I’ve been given a second chance to pass on all these great things I’m learning.”

Alfred sits with Skylar daily to practice skills she learned from the program’s home visitor, who monitors her progress. Alfred also attends any workshop, symposium or lecture about parenting, child development and early childhood education and reads several parenting magazines. “All of this is creating such a deep bond between us,” Alfred said.

A former Postal Service worker now living off disability payments, Alfred said she would like Skylar to have a computer and someone to teach them both how to use it. “I have my own learning disabilities and I can’t keep with the new computers and technology,” she said. “But I think that if I knew how to use them it would benefit Skylar.” “A computer and interactive toys or games could help Skylar with her speech,” her case worker said. But even if no one comes through with her wish list, Alfred said she’s already grateful for what the HIPPY program has taught her. “I feel like even if a child is not a risk, any parent could benefit from this program,” she said. “I’m from the old school. I didn’t have instructions for raising children and building up their self esteem. Now I do.”

The Migration of HIPPY

Brenda Brinson, Florida HIPPY PIRC Coordinator

The state of the economy has forced all of its citizens and social agencies to re-evaluate how they spend their resources. HIPPY has found more innovative and creative ways to provide services to children and families. One method HIPPY has used to serve more migrant families was to partner with the Florida Network on Disabilities’ Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) and the PAEC Migrant Education Program. This partnership did not require HIPPY to change its focus of empowering parents to become their child’s first teacher. Research and evaluation activities will be conducted to explore the effectiveness of HIPPY with migrant communities.
HIPPY Mission Statement

HIPPY programs empower parents as primary educators of their children in the home and foster parent involvement in school and community life to maximize the chances of successful early school experiences.

Male Involvement
Bob Mahan, St. Petersburg HIPPY Parent

Dear HIPPY,

Thank you for your wonderful program. My wife and I are enjoying teaching our two boys Joshua—4 and David—3 using your curriculum. I wanted to share a father and husband perspective of the program.

I have wanted to home school my children since before I was married or had children. However, I was not sure what curriculum to select, how to maintain accountability, and manage the education of multiple children simultaneously.

HIPPY has provided the training, curriculum and accountability I was looking for in the following ways:

1. The lessons and activities are age appropriate and interesting to my boys. They regularly ask if we can “do school”. One day, David’s only lesson was reading one of his books, which he and I did laying on the bed. Afterwards he said that that wasn’t good enough because he wanted to do school at the table with his papers and school box. That level of desire for learning is priceless.

2. Before we started with HIPPY, we told the boys that Miss Constance was their teacher. She corrected us, and we quickly learned that she is our teacher and we are their teacher. She is teaching us how to teach our children. My desire was always there, but I was not sure about my ability. I am now gaining confidence in my ability to teach my children.

3. My biggest concern has always been about consistency. I know I have the motivation and enthusiasm, but was not sure how to stay consistent with their education. The daily lessons and weekly training with Constance provide the consistency and accountability I wanted.

Thank you for providing a wonderful program that my wife and I use together as we participate together as our children’s first teachers.

Florida HIPPY State Office
Daharam Rampersad, Florida HIPPY Assistant State Director

The Florida HIPPY Training & Technical Assistance has oversight responsibilities for training and technical support to 17 HIPPY sites in Florida. The major source of funding for the T&TA Center comes from the Florida Office of Early Learning (OEL) at the Agency for Workforce Innovation. While the funding from OEL in 2009-10 provided services to 721 TANF-eligible children (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), a total of 2,099 children were served throughout Florida with various sources of funding that included AmeriCorps, PIRC, Title I, local, county and other foundation funding.

The State Office organizes regional and professional development trainings, conference calls, webinars, newsletters, coordinators’ meetings, and research activities. It also helps to guide agencies with their designs of creative pilot projects to serve non-traditional populations utilizing the HIPPY curriculum.

How Can I Help?
Make a Donation Today!

Checks payable to: USF Foundation (Memo Line: Acct # 530004 HIPPY Services Fund)
Please send all donations to: Florida HIPPY Foundation Account, 13301 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MHC 2113A, Tampa, FL 33612

The USF Foundation is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization.

Supported by funds from Florida’s Office of Early Learning, Agency for Workforce Innovation, in collaboration with the University of South Florida. Events, activities, programs, and facilities of the University of South Florida are available to all without regard to race, color, marital status, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, Vietnam or disabled veteran status as provided by law and in accordance with the University’s respect for personal dignity.