

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New First 5 Riverside Commissioners Announced

(JAN. 27, 2010) RIVERSIDE, CA — Seven new individuals will join the Riverside County Children & Families Commission, also known as First 5 Riverside, effective Feb. 1. Three appointments are pending and expected to be approved soon.

Changing the Commission make-up was part of Riverside County Board of Supervisor restructuring plans, which included incorporating First 5 Riverside as a division of the Department of Public Social Services last year.

The new commission now includes alternate commissioners, most of who will also serve on an Advisory Committee to the Commission. Each Supervisor appoints one commissioner and one alternate. In addition, there is an ‘at large’ commissioner and alternate, a member of the Board of Supervisors, an individual responsible for management of specifically identified County functions and the County Health Officer. Proposition 10, the California Children and Families Act of 1998, is the governing legislation that defines specific categorical criteria for Commissioners that apply to the Alternates as well.

“I am pleased with the composition of our new Commission, and look forward to working with them,” said Harry Freedman, executive director of First 5 Riverside. “We all share an appreciation for the efforts of the current Commission. They have provided significant leadership and contributions to improving the status of Riverside County children and families.

The Riverside County Children & Families Commission now includes:

Commissioners	Alternate Commissioners
Riverside County Supervisor John Benoit *	Riverside County Supervisor Bob Buster
Susan Loew, Director of Department of Public Social Services	Sylvia Deporto, Deputy Director of Department of Public Social Services *
Dr. Steven N Morford, Ret. School Psychologist and Administrator *	Connie Beasley, Founder and Community Liaison for The Carolyn E. Wylie Center for Children, Youth and Families
Debbie Whitaker-Meneses, Associate Dean of Early Childhood Education for Riverside Community College *	Stanley Grube, Health Care Executives Representative and President of the Health Care Executives Independent Chapter *
Sharon Baskett, Director of the Children Services Unit of Riverside County Office of Education *	Georgann Koenig, Early Childhood Development Educator
Lupe Ramos Watson, Indio City Councilwoman *	
Judee Cox, Executive Director of the Regional Access Project Foundation	Dr. Touraj Shafai, Pediatrician
Dr. Eric Frykman, Riverside County Public Health Officer	

*New to First 5 Riverside Commission

Biographical information is attached.

###

First 5 Riverside, the Riverside County Children & Families Commission, is a county division funded by Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues and was established by the County Board of Supervisors in 1999. First 5 Riverside provides funding of early education, health and child care services that help children through age 5 develop a strong foundation for success in school and throughout their lives. For more information about First 5 Riverside programs and other funded services, call 951-248-0014 or Toll Free 800-266-3880 or visit www.rccfc.org.

Biographical Information:

Sharon Baskett

Ms. Baskett is the Director of the Children Services Unit with the Riverside County Office of Education. She previously worked at First 5 Riverside from 2001-2007 as the administrator of Early Care and Education programs. She has been appointed as a Commissioner.

Connie Beasley

Ms. Beasley served as founder and executive director of the Children's Center (subsequently named The Carolyn E. Wylie Center for Children and Families) for 25 years. She has retired from this position, but continues her affiliation as a volunteer community liaison. She is a registered nurse and served as an instructor at Riverside Community College as well as in various nursing and project director positions. Beasley was a First 5 Riverside Commissioner since its inception. She will now serve as Commissioner Morford's alternate.

Riverside County Supervisor John Benoit

Supervisor Benoit was appointed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Nov. 4, 2009 to the Riverside County Board of Supervisors, replacing the late Roy Wilson in representing the County's 4th District. Prior to being appointed by the Governor to his current position, Benoit represented the 64th District in the California State Assembly from 2002-2008 and the 37th District in the State Senate in November 2008. He is a veteran of 31 years in law enforcement and also served on the Desert Sands School Board. He joined the Commission this year as a representative of the Board.

Riverside County Supervisor Bob Buster

Supervisor Buster has represented the 1st District on the Riverside County Board of Supervisors since 1993. Prior, he served on the Riverside City Council for two terms, 1980-1983 and 1990-1992. As a citizen in the 1970s and 80s he helped draft, gather signatures and lead the winning campaigns for the initiative laws that protect over 10,000 acres of citrus greenbelt, historic Victoria Avenue, scenic hillsides and arroyos, and the Santa Ana River wildlife refuge. Buster will serve as Benoit's alternate.

Judee Cox

Ms. Cox is the executive director of the Regional Access Project Foundation, a non-profit organization committed to supporting health, mental health, and juvenile prevention and intervention programs in the Coachella Valley. She is a member of the local Emergency Food and Shelter Board and has served on the First 5 Riverside Advisory Committee since January 2009. She has been appointed as a Commissioner.

Sylvia Deporto

Ms. Deporto has more than 25 years of experience in the field of social work including child protective services, elderly, blind and disabled Services to adults, and service to developmentally delayed children. She has been with the Riverside County Department of Social Services Children's Services since 1992 and is currently the Assistant Director of Children's Services. She will serve Commissioner Loew's alternate.

Dr. Eric Frykman

Dr. Frykman joined the Riverside Community Health Agency as Director and Public Health Officer in February 2007. Previously he was the Health Officer for San Bernardino County Department of Public Health from March 2004 and served as Interim Public Health Director since July 2006. He also served as Chief of Disease Control & Prevention since June 2001. As the County Health Officer, he has been a Commissioner since February 2007.

Stanley Grube

Mr. Grube has more than 40 years experience in the health care industry, serving most recently as CEO as well as various other capacities during his career. He has also served on the Ken Calvert Healthcare Advisory Committee and on the Riverside County Emergency Medical Care Committee. He has been appointed as a Commissioner.

Georgann Koenig

Ms. Koenig has taught early childhood education for local colleges, provided consultation for early childhood education and served as Director of the San Geronio Child Care Consortium for 18 years. In addition, she was recognized for her work in fostering inclusive settings for children with special needs by Prevent Child Abuse Riverside County. She served on the First 5 Riverside Advisory Committee since 2001. She will now serve as Commissioner Baskett's alternate.

Susan Loew

Ms. Loew has been employed by the County of Riverside for 18 years. She joined the Department of Public Social Services in 1999 as a Deputy Director for Administrative Services. In December 2003, Susan was appointed as the Assistant Director of Administration and in September 2007, she was appointed by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors to the position of Director of the Department of Public Social Services. She has been on the First 5 Riverside Commission since December 2004.

Dr. Steven N Morford

Dr. Morford is presently retired but spent 36 years working in public education. Immediately prior to his retirement, Morford served as Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) Director for the Riverside Unified School District. He also served as SELPA Director for Marin County Office of Education, Director of Programs for Exceptional Children for the Oakland Unified School District, Superintendent at the California Department of Education Diagnostic Center for Neurologically Handicapped Children and Student Support Services Administrator for Jurupa Unified School District. He has been appointed as a Commissioner.

Dr. Touraj Shafai

Dr. Shafai has been a Riverside pediatrician in private practice since 1973. He previously served as Chief of the Riverside General Hospital Department of Pediatrics. He is a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics and chairman of the Breastfeeding Committee. He served on the First 5 Riverside Advisory Committee since 2000. He will now serve as an alternate to Commissioner Cox.

Lupe Ramos Watson, Indio City Councilwoman

Ms. Ramos-Watson is a council member and prior mayor for the City of Indio. In that capacity, she served on the Coachella Valley Association of Governments Human and Community Committee from 2004 to present and on the Homeless Committee from 2006 to present. She has been appointed as a Commissioner.

Debbie Whitaker-Meneses

Prior to working at Riverside Community College, Whitaker-Meneses worked at UC Riverside Extension on Early Childhood Education and was an elementary school teacher for six years. She is also a member of the Riverside County Child Care Consortium, a certified trainer in early childhood education and has presented at numerous local and state workshops on the subject. She has been appointed as a Commissioner.