



## **Grant to increase after school programming at Fontana and area schools**

Fontana's SMART KIDS program is underway as part of a statewide program creating a unique partnership between service agencies, municipal government and schools which is changing the landscape of after school opportunities for children.

SMART KIDS was formally approved by the Fontana City Council January 23. It took five years for the state to implement after the program, which was approved as a ballot proposition in 2002 and championed by then-private-citizen Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The state now has a \$550 million fund that is part of the After School Education and Safety (ASES) program and is comprised of \$428 million provided by the Proposition 49 designation with the balance made up of \$122 million in state funding. Establishing the funding depended on availability of tax revenues.

The Fontana program brings the city, the Fontana Unified School District, Colton Joint Unified School District and the Boys and Girls Club of Fontana together for implementation. The City of Fontana was awarded slightly more than \$2 million per year for three years which is renewable upon successful completion, evaluation and review.

The SMART KIDS program will be an enhanced version of Fontana's AWARE -- Achievement, Writing, Arts and Recreation After school -- which had been operating for the past 10 years on a more limited basis and will integrate the Boys and Girls Club Project Learn program.

A total of 34 schools in Fontana and Bloomington (Colton Joint Unified School District) will now have free after school programming with 19 of those schools under Fontana's SMART KIDS program. The expansion includes 13 Fontana elementary schools and three middle schools as well as three elementary schools in Bloomington, all attended by the children of Fontana residents. Three additional Colton schools and two in Etiwanda School District will remain in operation under the AWARE program providing a total of 24 schools under Fontana and the Boys & Girls Club's supervision.

When the funds were made available in September 2006, state superintendent of public instruction Jack O'Connell said the program is designed to allow establishment of a safe haven for kids before and after school. Specifically, the programs will provide educational enrichment, physical activities, and support for students who are struggling to meet the standards, as well as provide homework assistance.

"This is really going to revolutionize the after school program in Fontana and provide a great opportunity for our community to have child care at every elementary school," said Ray Gonzales, community services manager for the city who will be managing the city's involvement.



“This program is innovative in taking the step toward providing after school programming for the City of Fontana, and for the state. We’re really excited to be a part of it,” Gonzales said.

“We need 138 staff, not only with Fontana but also with the with the Colton school district,” said Frances Hernandez, community services supervisor for the AWARE program who will slide over into the same role for SMART KIDS.

“We’re already hiring, developing training, and certifying employees. This is a big feat.”

The program is filling a gap for the school district. It targets at-risk and latch-key children and their educational, social and emotional needs during after school hours, the time most unsupervised children are getting into trouble. This innovative program also includes an afternoon snack as part of the Healthy Fontana Program.

“This program is unique in that it provides homework help, enrichment, and cultural arts for the children. It provides a safe place where kids can be happy and productive,” said Terrie Schneider, executive director of the Boys & Girls Club of Fontana.

“These are kids that normally fall through the cracks and need that extra assistance,” Hernandez said.

“Many of the principals are excited about the program. We have a lot of work to do. This will require a lot of teamwork to insure the program’s success.

“I think it’s going to be very rewarding for a lot of students to help them meet their social and emotional needs, as well as their daily fill of activities and educational enrichment.

“Our mission is to prepare, motivate and inspire all youth participants with caring adults, quality academic support, health and wellness opportunities and an array of engaging and enriching learning opportunities after school,” Hernandez said.

“We’re excited about this true collaborative effort between agencies,” said Schneider.

“We have opportunities to share programming ideas like Project Learn and join together on field trips and special projects to involve the kids in their community.”

The ASES program in Fontana translates into nearly 3,000 children having access to the free program each day.

For more information on the SMART KIDS program, call (909) 428-8360.