



FIRST 5 LA E-NEWSLETTER

June 12, 2006



Micky Martinez (left), Valentina Bizarrri (center), and Ana Gonzalez celebrate their graduation from the Teens and Toddlers program.

Teens and Toddlers Program Boosts Relationship Skills and Self-Esteem

Last year, **Ana Rodriguez**, a sophomore at Phoenix Continuation High School in West LA, was hardly speaking to her parents and doing poorly in school.

But after completing a 15-week elective course, *Teens and Toddlers*, offered by Children: Our Ultimate Investment, a **First 5 LA** grantee, she has brought up her grades, improved her relationship with her parents, and set a goal of becoming a midwife.

"She has blossomed," said **Joe Groschadl**, a teacher/advisor in the program, designed to build teens' self-esteem, improve their relationship skills, and reduce teen pregnancy. He credits the change in participants like Rodriguez to the interaction that they have as volunteer helpers at a neighboring child-care center.

"Working with the mentally delayed kids makes me feel softer inside," said Rodriguez. "It makes me want to be a better person."

Founded in 1978 by **Laura Huxley**, wife of philosopher/writer **Aldous Huxley**, the program has been offered in five California high schools and throughout England.

Although birth rates for 15- to 19-year-olds have dropped over 33 percent since 1994, the U.S. still has the highest teen birth rates among industrialized countries.

The twice-weekly classes are taught by mental health professionals, who cover topics such as child-care skills, anger management, and self-reflection.

For information, call **Karen Pfeiffer**, director of administration, at (323) 461-8248 or visit www.children-ourinvestment.org.