

The Alabama Partnership for Children Announces New Staff

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Tonya Jones was hired in January 2015 as the Young Child Wellness Expert with Project LAUNCH. She was raised in Colorado Springs, CO. She has a BA degree in Social Work and a Master's Degree in Education. She has over 25 years of experience in working in the field of early care and education. She has worked with various preschool programs to include private nonprofit, faith-based, Head Start/Early Head Start and government funded programs. Her primary focus throughout her career has been working with children with special needs and/or behavior challenges.

The Young Child Wellness Expert (YCWE) has primary responsibility for all state LAUNCH functions and also provides support to local project staff. The position is full-time and is based at the Alabama Partnership for Children. With the LAUNCH Coordinator, the YCWE is responsible for developing and managing the YCW Council, supervising LAUNCH staff, and providing administrative and managerial oversight for partner contracts and services provided. The YCWE is responsible for the environmental scan, evaluation plan, and strategic plan and provides support for these functions at the local level.

Katie Naman also joined the APC in January 2015 as the Help Me Grow Alabama Coordinator. The Help Me Grow initiative is currently being implemented in the Central Alabama area, and Katie has joined the APC to continue working towards statewide expansion. Katie received a B.S. degree in Nutrition Science from Auburn University and a Master of Public Health degree with a concentration in Maternal and Child Health Leadership and Policy from University of Alabama Birmingham (UAB). She recently completed internships with both the Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC) and the Autism Society of Alabama. She also comes with research experience from UAB and over 10 years of direct child care experience. Katie is originally from Mobile, Alabama, and will soon be moving to the Montgomery area from Birmingham.

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Learning and Play' provides
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February FOCUS

Check out this month's Smart Start FOCUS [packet](#) on Early Childhood Investment Matters!

Mark Your Calendars:

**Alabama Governor's Early
Childhood Education
Leadership Summit**
February, 19, 2015
Wynlakes Country Club
Montgomery, AL

Partner Focus:

Alabama Governor Pledges to Fully Fund State's High Quality, Voluntary Pre-K Program by End of Term

Alabama School Readiness Alliance

During his inauguration address, Alabama Governor Robert Bentley pledged to make Alabama's high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten program available for all families by the end of his second term.

In his remarks the Governor said, "At the end of the next four years we will be able to tell every parent in Alabama there is a pre-k classroom available for your child."

Members of the [Alabama School Readiness Alliance](#) Pre-K Task Force - a group of 40 prominent leaders from the business, civic, medical, legal, philanthropic, military and child advocacy communities - welcomed Governor Bentley's pledge. In the 2015 legislative session, the ASRA Pre-K Task Force is encouraging state leaders to increase funding for Alabama's First Class Pre-K Program by an additional \$13.2 million.

"We join every Alabamian in congratulating Governor Robert Bentley and all of the state officials sworn in today," said Robert Powers and Mike Luce, the co-chairs of the Alabama School Readiness Alliance Pre-K Task Force. "We are grateful for their leadership and encouraged that Governor Bentley is continuing to make expansion of the state's nationally recognized pre-k program a cornerstone of his administrative policy. We look forward to working with him and our legislative champions to make our shared vision of 'pre-k for all' a reality."

For eight years in a row, Alabama's First Class Pre-K program, which is managed by the [Alabama Department of Children's Affairs](#), has been ranked the number one pre-kindergarten program in the country for quality. By closing the school readiness gap, First Class Pre-K has been able to close the later academic achievement gaps between low-income participants and their higher-income peers by an average of 25 percent. However, in the 2014-2015 school year, there are only enough classrooms statewide to reach approximately 12 percent of the state's four-year olds.

The Alabama School Readiness Alliance is leading a ten-year campaign, now entering its third year, to fully fund Alabama's high-quality and voluntary First Class Pre-K program while maintaining the program's strong benchmarks for quality and accountability. The 2015 Alabama School Readiness Alliance's Pre-K Task Force's Recommendations can be viewed in its entirety by clicking [here](#).

14th Annual Alabama Autism Conference

February 27, 2015
Tuscaloosa, AL

Week of the Young Child

April 12-18, 2015

Provider Appreciation Day

May 9, 2015

Project LAUNCH Early Childhood Summit on Early Brain Development and Social/Emotional Health

May 21, 2015
Tuscaloosa, AL

Special Thanks To:

Special thanks to the [Ozark-Dale County Family Service Center](#) for hosting a Books, Balls and Blocks event on Saturday, January 31st. And a BIG thank you to all the families and volunteers that attended!

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On January 29th, the [Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention](#) presented grant awards to 12 nonprofit organizations. The APC was one of the agencies to receive funding in support of our [Strengthening Families](#) work.

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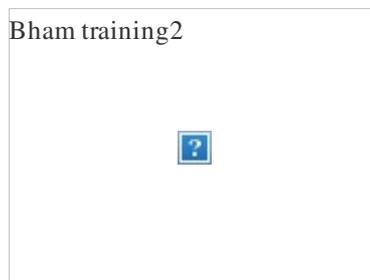
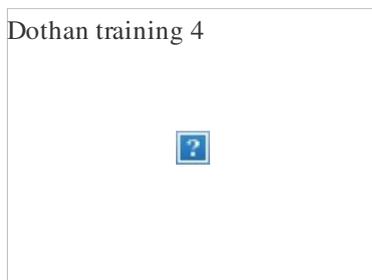
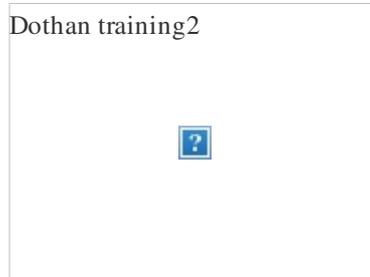
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Initiative Focus:

Parent Leadership Project Facilitator Training Completed

The Parent Leadership Project (PLP), a program administered by the Alabama Partnership for Children and funded by the [Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention](#), began facilitator training for Parent Mentors and Leaders at the end of January. Training took place in three different areas of the state. Facilitator training was offered in Tuscaloosa at Tuscaloosa's One Place Family Resource Center, in Dothan at Alfred Saliba Family Services Center and in Jefferson County at Family Guidance Center of Alabama. The Parent Leadership Project develops the next steps in leadership development at the community level and the formation of an Alabama Parent Leadership Network (APLN). The program incorporates the mentoring structure of the Safe and Secure Children (SSC) model with the conversation-based learning of the SSC and Parent Café models, and adds more intensive leadership skill-building. Parent mentors and parent leaders who completed facilitator training are now recruiting Parent Peer Learners to complete the 10-session PLP curriculum. The three Family Resource Centers participating in PLP hope to begin the program with recruited parents starting in March.

Below are some pictures from the PLP Facilitator trainings:



Our Mission: To work in partnership with other public and private entities to maintain an effective state and local system of resources and support that enables parents, families, and others who care for young children to ensure that they are healthy, protected, nurtured, and offered every opportunity to succeed in life.

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Alabama Partnership for Children
2529 Bell Road
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