

**United Way
of Santa Barbara County**

320 East Gutierrez Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
tel 805-965-8591
fax 805-962-3461
www.unitedwaysb.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Sara Templeton
United Way of Santa Barbara County
stempleton@unitedwaysb.org
805-965-8591 ext 121
805-729-6462

National Summer Learning Association recognizes United Way of Santa Barbara County's Fun in the Sun as a 2012 recipient of the National Excellence in Summer Learning Award

*Fun in the Sun provides low-income students
with high-quality summer learning*

Editor's Note: Gary Huggins, CEO of the National Summer Learning Association, is available for phone interviews about Excellence in Summer Learning Award winners. To interview Huggins, reporters should contact Kate Shatzkin by phone at 410-856-1370 x208. Paul Didier, CEO of United Way of Santa Barbara County is available for interviews about United Way of Santa Barbara County's Fun in the Sun. To interview Didier, contact Katie Higgins at 805-965-8591 x107.

The 2012 Fun in the Sun program will be in operation through Aug. 3; see availability for media visits in the accompanying advisory.

Santa Barbara, CA—[The National Summer Learning Association](#) (NSLA) has chosen United Way of Santa Barbara County's [Fun in the Sun](#) (FITS), as a recipient of the 2012 National Excellence in Summer Learning Award.

Drawing on an array of community partners (involving 72 service delivery partners, 15 funding partners, and 500 volunteer mentors), United Way of Santa Barbara County's Fun in the Sun (FITS) serves 250 young people ages 7 to 18 for seven weeks each summer. All participants come from low-income families and qualify for free and reduced-price meals during the school year.

The FITS program is designed for participants willing to make a multi-summer commitment, and offers a daily emphasis on reading and writing. Afternoon enrichment opportunities include activities in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM), service learning, and field trips throughout the summer. In 2011, 82 percent of participants showed an average of 2.1 reading grade level gains, according program evaluation. Initial program results for 2012 are increasingly impressive. In addition to receiving lunch and snacks and taking part in daily physical activity, young people take home bags of fresh fruit and vegetables for the weekend, along with clothing and school supplies.

"United Way of Santa Barbara County's Fun in the Sun is thrilled, honored, and humbled to be selected for the 2012 National Excellence in Summer Learning Award. This award is a community-wide recognition, with so many people and organizations helping during the past 16 years," said Paul Didier, President and CEO of United Way of Santa Barbara County. "In addition to the great sense of community these partners help provide, our focus on research-based and continuous quality improvement activities for many years has paid huge dividends in results for partners, children, and families."

Research has established that low-income students are disproportionately at risk to lose academic skills during the summer. While most children lose up two months worth of math skills during summer breaks, lower-income children

also lose two to three months of reading skills. Excellence Award winning programs strive to curb these losses, but also employ other research-based practices to build 21st Century skills, confidence, parental engagement, and future aspirations.

Founded at Johns Hopkins University in 1992, the National Summer Learning Association (www.summerlearning.org) has driven much of the recent research and awareness (e.g., TIME Magazine cover story, August 2, 2010) into summer learning loss and its effect on the achievement gap and provides resources, guidance, and expertise to the summer learning community. Their annual Excellence in Summer Learning Award recognizes programs that demonstrate excellence in accelerating academic achievement and promoting healthy development for students in K-12th grades.

“These excellent programs (National Excellence in Summer Learning Award winners) demonstrate the full potential of summer learning to transform the future for young people, helping them boost educational achievement and clearly see a path to college and career,” said Gary Huggins, CEO of the National Summer Learning Association. The Excellence in Summer Learning Award seeks to draw national attention to these exemplary programs which provide and expand access to high-quality summer learning experiences. The award will be presented at the Association’s annual Summer Changes Everything national conference October 22-24, 2012. For more information about the conference visit: www.summerlearning.org/conference

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About United Way of Santa Barbara County:

United Way of Santa Barbara County (UWSBC) has the unique and positive vision that “in our community, everyone has a hopeful future.” Since 1923, UWSBC has served Santa Barbara County community through funding, volunteer development, and by utilizing its own unique initiatives that involve dozens of local non-profit and public sector agencies. UWSBC’s local community driven **Power of Partnership™** priorities help children, families & seniors with a focus on Education, Income and Health.

Fun in the Sun is a summer learning program component that is a part of United Way of Santa Barbara County’s United for Literacy (UFL) Initiative. The purpose of UFL is to help achieve United Way of Santa Barbara County’s Ten Year Education goals to increase on-time high school graduation rate by 50% and increase students reading at or above grade level by 50% in every grade.