

# CNMI BRAIN BUILDERS NEWSLETTER



JUNE 2024 | ISSUE 18



On June 5, 2024, Acting Governor David M. Apatang signed a proclamation designating June as CNMI Children Matter Month to honor early childhood education. Throughout the month of June, symposiums were held across the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. These gatherings provided a valuable opportunity for families, partner agencies, early childhood educators, and home-center-based providers to engage in discussions. The talks focused on amplifying the importance of early learning and understanding the collective effort required to guide and nurture children's overall development as a community. These events also served as a tribute to the memory of Tamia "Mimi" M. Manglona, who passed away sometime after participating in the 2023 CNMI Children Matter Month Proclamation Signing Event.



# June

is  
**CNMI Children  
Matter Month**



**"All children in the  
CNMI will be safe,  
healthy, and thriving  
members of a culturally  
diverse community.  
Their families will have  
access to the high  
quality supports they  
need to achieve their  
potential."**

# JUNE IS CNMI CHILDREN MATTER MONTH



## PROCLAMATION CNMI CHILDREN MATTER MONTH June 2024

**WHEREAS**, all young children in the CNMI deserve quality early learning environments that support them as capable and competent lifelong learners; and

**WHEREAS**, the CNMI is dedicated to increasing the awareness of the importance of relationships and social and emotional development in the early years and to celebrate the important caregivers who raise our island communities' children; and

**WHEREAS**, nurturing parenting, quality and accessible childcare, and early education programs build strong brains during the critical years from birth to age 5; and

**WHEREAS**, the future of our community and islands depends on the quality of early childhood experiences provided to CNMI's young children today;

**WHEREAS**, we must work together as a CNMI community to increase awareness and public understanding of the critical importance of the first five years in setting the foundation for our children's future academic and personal success and the direct role we all play in building their young brains;

**NOW, THEREFORE, I, DAVID M. APATANG**, Acting Governor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands by virtue of the authority vested in us by the Constitution and Laws of the Commonwealth, do hereby proclaim **June 2024** as

### CNMI CHILDREN MATTER MONTH

We encourage the Commonwealth to come together in fostering an environment that promotes the growth, development, and well-being of our children. Together, let us reaffirm our commitment to the children of the CNMI to ensure they are protected and that we strive to be a society that cherishes and uplifts every child. As a community, we shall recognize the essential roles that caregivers play in creating a nurturing foundation in which our children can build and grow.







Hafa Adai yan Tirow,

My name is Arsene M. Borja, born and raised on Tinian. My parents were farmers and lived in Marpo Valley in the early 50's to late 60's. Growing up in the valley was an exciting experience. Our daily routine was to wake up very early to get ready for school on weekdays. On weekends, we headed to our plantation field pulling weeds as early as possible to beat the sunrise. Growing up in the valley was so much fun. With very limited toys to play with, on the adventure side, we made ourselves slingshots for birds, and traps for chickens. We even played mom & pop store using empty cans for our inventories and leaves as currency. We had so many fun experiences and only now when I look back, our activities are a part of the learning process.

I really don't understand why that when I'm out in an informal setting, such as gatherings; socializing; or even at parties; I freely express myself or join others conversating like nobody's business, but when I'm in a formal setting my introvert self would kick in, even when I was going to school, especially when I'm attending school in Saipan. I would just sit at the very back and listen. In a discussion, I would hold back my opinions or responses, and not even bother to volunteer because I was afraid that my classmates would laugh at me, even if I knew the answer. I was just so scared that I rather just shut my mouth and not share my thoughts. I guess I lacked the confidence in me.

Fast forward to today, I am truly grateful and thankful for the partnership with the CNMI Brain Builders. It has really boosted my confidence after the "Mind in the Making" training. The first two days into the training, I was so shy and nervous. My presentation this year at the Annual CNM Children Matter Month Symposium was a huge success compared to last year, because of the confidence that was nurtured by the CNMI Brain Builders training. Thank you to Evergreen Learning!

The slogan "You already have what it takes," is really true. It's just a matter of you taking control of the essential life skills. These essential skills work both in children and adults. These seven skills are Focus and Self Control - It involves paying attention, remembering the rules, thinking and exercising self-control. Making Connections - Making unusual connections is at the core of creativity. Figuring out what's the same, what different and sorting out things into categories. Perspective Thinking - It involves figuring out what others think and feel and forms the basis of children understanding the intentions of their parents' teachers' and friends. Taking on Challenges - Life is full of stresses and challenges. Children or adults who are willing to take the challenges instead of avoiding or simply coping will do better in school and in life. Critical Thinking - is the ongoing search for valid and reliable knowledge to guide beliefs, decision and actions. Communicating - Communicating is much more than understanding languages, speaking, reading and writing, it is the life skill of determining what one wants to communicate and realizing how our communications will be understood. Self-Directed, Engage Learning- It is through learning that we can realize our potential.

As the world changes, so can we for as long as we live-as long as we learn. With these seven life skills, it is vital that we set our goals using the WOOP process, what you Wish to accomplish, the best Outcome, what is the Obstacle, lastly, what is your Plan. If you follow these WOOP process, you can maximize your potentials with great confidence. I encourage everyone out there to take advantage of the CNMI Brain Builders "Mind in the Making" training to increase or strengthen your skills as brain builders of the CNMI.



**Mr. Arsene M. Borja**



# SAIPAN

On June 8, 2024, the CNMI Children Matter Month Symposium took place at the Royal Taga Hall in Saipan World Resort. The event welcomed 327 attendees, including families, partner agencies, early childhood educators, and home-based providers.

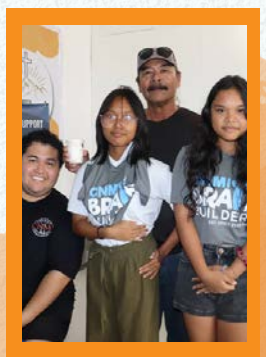






# ROTA

On June 15, 2024, Rota community participated in the CNMI Children Matter Month Symposium at Puesto Grill. The event was attended by 71 individuals, including families, partner agencies, early childhood educators, and home-based providers.







# TINIAN

On June 22, 2024, Tinian hosted the CNMI Children Matter Month Symposium at Bar K in the Tinian Western Lodge. The event welcomed 98 attendees, including families, partner agencies, early childhood educators, and home-based providers.





# Message of Appreciation

On behalf of the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs (DCCA), Child Care and Development Fund Program (CCDF), Evergreen Learning, Inc., our CNMI children, their parents and families, the CNMI Brain Builders team wishes to extend a sincere gratitude to all who made the implementation of the Science of Early Learning (SOEL) Initiative - CNMI Brain Builders a success. No words can express how deeply humbled and honored we are to experience such an amazing outcome over the last few years. We especially thank the following partners for standing alongside us and believing in what it takes to elevate the importance of early learning and brain building in the first five years in children's lives.

Thank you to the Commonwealth Health Care Corporation (CHCC) System of Care; CHCC Home Visiting Program; CHCC Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) Program; CHCC Children's Clinic; CHCC Family-to-Family Program, DICE Pacific, LLC., Joeten-Kiyu Public Library (JKPL); Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems, Inc.; Northern Marianas College, Division of Youth Services (DYS) - Parent Training and Education Program; CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities; Child Care Licensing Program, CNMI Public School System - Early Intervention Program; University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD); Filipino Community of Rota (FilCoR); Puesto Grill in Rota; Grace Christian Academy Church in Rota; Rota Public Library; and Tinian Public Library. We appreciate your commitment, collaboration, partnership, and the work that you have invested to assist us in reaching out to the parents and families that you serve in order to offer them what SOEL has available to benefit their children.

We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to our CNMI's Home and Center-Based leadership team and providers for your unwavering commitment in bringing research-based resources and tools into your programs - all for our CNMI children. We commend your dedication to increasing the quality of care for our children. Know that because of your work, in due time, the children and families that you serve will reach their highest potential.

To the Honorable Governor Arnold I. Palacios, and Honorable Lt. Governor David M. Apatang, DCCA Secretary Francisco M. Rabauliman, Acting Secretary Vivian T. Sablan, CCDF Program Administrator Maribel Loste, Acting CCDF Administrator Genevieve S. Deleon Guerrero, Congressman TJ DLC. Manglona, Green Meadow School Parent Joy Marybeth Regachol, Saint Joseph Child Care Provider Maryl Joyce Canoja, License Exempt Family Child Care, Little Angels Lorraine Babauta, Rota Mayor Aubrey M. Hocog, AFV Child Care Joanne San Nicolas, Tinian Mayor Edwin P. Aldan, Parent Carmen C. King, and Vice-Chairwoman Marie San Nicolas: Thank you for your support during the recent 2024 CNMI Children Matter Month celebration in Saipan, Rota, and Tinian. Your messages of inspiration were well-taken and were truly aligned with our program goals and outcomes.

Lastly, to all who joined us during all the SOEL- CNMI Brain Builders events that were completed over the years and to our community at large: Thank you, *si yu'us ma'ase'*, *ghilisu*, *sulang*, *maraming salamat po*, and *xie'xie'*!

We wish you all the best on your brain building journey. Remember, you all already have what it takes!



CHCC, Family 2 Family Health Information Center



Early Intervention Services



CHCC - System of Care & Healthy Transitions



Division of Youth Services



Joeten Kiyu Public Library



CHCC, H.O.M.E. Visiting Program



CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities



CNMI University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities



CHCC, MICAH



CHCC, CNMI WIC



Northern Marianas College



Filipino Community of Rota



Grace Christian Academy



Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc.



Puesto Grill



DICE Pacific, LLC



Child Care & Development Fund Program



Evergreen Learning, Inc.



2022



# Appreciation Spotlight

We are incredibly grateful for the dedication and passion of Ms. Melissa Palacios, Science of Early Learning Coordinator, and Ms. Rayanna Fital, Science of Early Learning Administrative Assistant. These remarkable women are the driving force behind the CNMI Brain Builders. They brought their unwavering "can do" attitude to every challenge and opportunity. Your commitment to early learning and your positive energy inspire us every day! Thank you for your exceptional work and tireless efforts over the years!



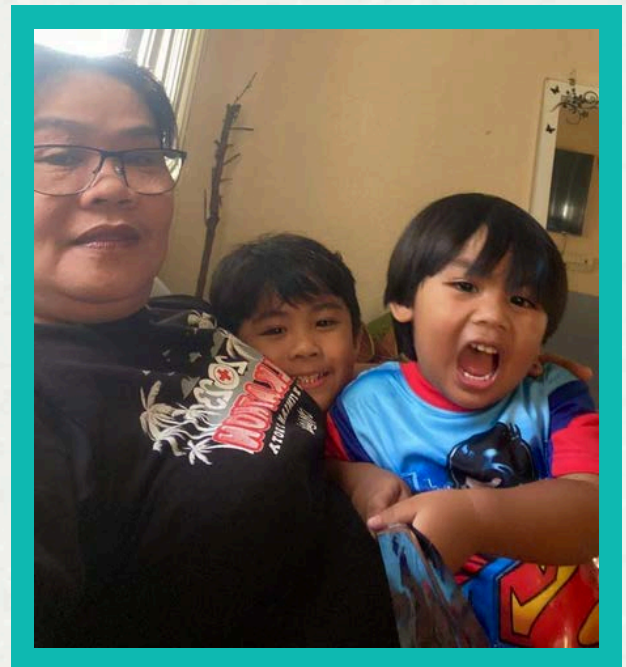


Children learn best from rich, responsive social interactions with other people. These interactions allow children and adults to share attention and build bonds. In those interactions, adults can scaffold children's learning.

## You're the Best Teacher!

### What Does Research Say?

- Responsive caregiving builds on social, back-and-forth interactions with a child. These interactions foster trust and emotional security. They also support a child's engagement, learning, and other positive outcomes that persist into adulthood.
- Building a strong relationship with at least one responsive, consistent caregiver is essential for children's successful emotional and social skills, as well as their cognitive and problem-solving skills.
- Strong early relationships also help children become resilient when they are faced with stress in life.
- Young children learn best from real, live humans. Television and other screens are no substitute! Research highlights the importance of interactions with adults for children's language learning, imitation skills, and memory development.
- Responding consistently to children in a back-and-forth manner also helps children learn. When adults respond to an infant's coos and babbles, babies respond back with more advanced language sounds. The power of back-and-forth interactions is not limited to infancy. All young children learn better from back-and-forth interactions.

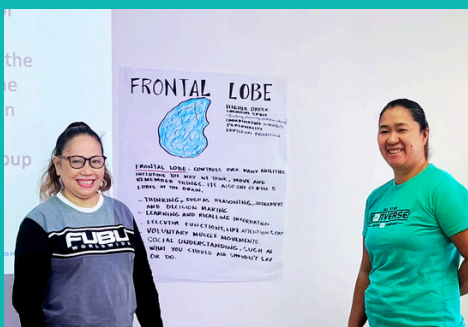




## CONNECTING AT HOME



### Past Event Photos



Spending time together at home provides many opportunities for learning and bonding moments. Here are some tips you can try.

### React and Reflect

- Children feel supported when you listen and respond. Respond when your child requests your attention. Acknowledge that you hear them, even if you can't fulfill their request right away.

### Be a Copycat

- Practice imitation with games like "Simon Says." You can even roll a ball back and forth. Back-and-forth interactions help create healthy relationships and strong bonds.

### Look at It Together

- Use a picture book to make up a new story. What's happening in the pictures? Ask your child to chime in. Use the book to begin a conversation. Talk about themes like feelings or making new friends.

### Make a Snack Together

- Preparing food together can be a fun, new experience. Talk about what you observe. What colors do you see? What are the smells, textures, and tastes of foods you're using?

*"You're the Best Teacher." Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, May 21, 2024, [eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/active-play-health-tips-families](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/active-play-health-tips-families).*





**Featured Researcher:  
Dr. Edward Tronick**



Professor of  
Psychology,  
University of  
Massachusetts  
Boston

*"Your emotions grow out of your relational history. Even if you've had the most adverse set of early experiences, when you immerse yourself in new relationships with space for mismatch and repair, meanings of hopelessness can be transformed into meanings of hope."*

**Weather Feelings**

Ages 3-5



Encourage your child to think about their feelings and describe them using the weather. Do they feel sunny, cloudy, or rainy? Ask them to explain why. Share how you're feeling with them. Talk together about what to do if one of you is not feeling "sunny."

**See what your  
child is learning**

Brainy Background

When your child connects their feelings with images, they're using symbols to describe thoughts and feelings—an important literacy skill. This conversation also helps them understand you can both have different feelings, which is important in understanding how others think or feel.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom mobile app!



**vroom**

**#vroomtip  
of the  
month**

# Congratulations

**Win It Wednesday Winners**



## Raffle Contest

**Kiking T Rebs  
Evelyn Cruz  
Essa Palacios  
Lorena Sagan  
Rissa Sam Jacob Rigby  
Vannesa Abella  
Alecs Gracie  
Carla Castro**



**June Winners**

Join our growing CNMI Brain Builders Facebook Page!



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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/cnmibrainbuilders/>