



SLO County Help Me Grow is a county-wide system that supports children and their families by providing free developmental screenings and linkages with community services to promote healthy growth and development for all children from birth to age five. Help Me Grow brings together families, pediatricians, early care and education, and human service providers to ensure that San Luis Obispo County's children reach their optimal potential.

MAY'S HERO

Laura Ottrando,
RN, PHN
Martha's Place Children's Assessment Center

Laura Ottrando is a champion for children, who is deeply devoted to giving a voice to some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

For more than three decades, Laura has dedicated her work as a Registered Nurse to maternal-child health, serving in various settings including NICU, OB, Prenatal and Public Health. She currently conducts specialized pediatric evaluations at Martha's Place, a multi-disciplinary clinic that is a partnership between County Behavioral Health and Public Health. Martha's Place serves Medi-Cal eligible children birth to 5 years who may have experienced adverse events, have behaviors that are interfering with their social-emotional development, and/or are prenatally exposed to alcohol or other substances. The goal is to facilitate appropriate interventions, referrals, family support and parent education.

The work Laura carries out at Martha's Place can change the trajectory of a child's life, and colleagues say that Laura goes above and beyond to make sure no one falls through the cracks. She diligently leads the charge on requesting, sorting, extracting and reporting on children's medical and service records that often reveal vital information, potential red flags and areas of concern to explore. When one young patient exhibited signs of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), but prenatal records did not document alcohol exposure, Laura's extra efforts brought to light an emergency room report with an MRI for an accidental injury that showed a brain malformation seen in individuals with

FAS. This was the objective and tangible piece of information needed to complete the diagnosis that would help the child and family better understand future needs and supports. Laura's persistence, integrity and thoroughness truly give high-risk infants and children the opportunity to turn things around.

Laura's 14 years of dedication to Martha's Place—and the families it serves—speaks beautifully to the leadership legacy of the facility's co-founder, Shirley Bianchi, who passed away in February 2021. Laura embodies and carries on Shirley's gift for listening, building relationships, and living with a public-servant heart committed to a career-long mission of providing services to vulnerable children and helping them meet their fullest potential. Laura says her greatest reward is knowing that she is working on behalf of little ones in hopes that they can feel safe, understood, encouraged, valued and loved. She realizes the urgency that exists when it comes to ensuring one's well-being and development in those early years.

**Thank you, Laura.
You are a true Hands-On Hero.**



"Hands-on Heroes is a recognition program, coordinated with partner agencies, that honors individuals making a difference in the lives of young children and families. The year 2021 highlights Heroes in working in child growth and development. To learn more about "Help Me Grow" and "Hands-on Heroes," please visit slohelpmegrow.org and first5slo.org.