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Wendy Dickens

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## First 5 Shasta Hires Dynamic New Director

### Local Children's Advocate Selected to Lead Investment in Young Children

First 5 Shasta, Shasta County's primary investor in early childhood, announces that North State native Wendy Dickens has been hired as the organization's new Executive Director. Dickens will oversee daily operations, manage a \$1.2 million annual budget, and continue leading First 5 Shasta's investment in young children, ages 0-to-5, and their families. She will be working with the First 5 Shasta Commission, staff, grantees of First 5 Shasta's Prop 10 (tobacco tax) funds, community partners, area experts, and committed community members to keep building and strengthening a pathway to success for young children. To date, First 5 Shasta's investment in programs, activities, and services intended to forge this pathway amounts to just over \$25 million.

With an education that includes a triple major of Child Development, Psychology and Social Science (Bachelor's Degree, California State University – Chico) and a Master's Degree in Social Work (California State University – Sacramento), Dickens comes equipped to assess and address the emerging needs of Shasta County's youngest residents. Having served as a supervisor and program manager at Shasta County Health and Human Services – Children's Branch, she comes well prepared to step into high level leadership and serve with ease as a knowledgeable, experienced "0-to-5" ambassador to the community.

Dickens says, "I believe that the first five years of life are instrumental and lay the foundation for a child's future development. Providing parents and providers with programs and resources that help them enhance children's development during the crucial years from birth to age five and reducing adverse childhood experiences is an important area of growth for our community. I am so proud to be part of the tremendous work First 5 Shasta is doing to educate families, support optimal development for all young children, and influence the creation of systems that will benefit our community well into the future."

Stepping into the director role, Dickens acquires a legacy of prudent, forward-thinking leadership. Muffy Berryhill, the original executive director, contributed eleven years to structuring and launching First 5 Shasta's investment effort. Joy Garcia, director for the last five years, strengthened that investment foundation and built solid partnerships. Upon leaving First 5 Shasta to relocate with her family to Peru, Garcia said "This is definitely the most difficult professional departure I have ever experienced. I'm excited to continue my work with children by teaching in Peru, but I will miss being part of such a compelling team. I know, beyond a doubt, that what we are doing is making a profound difference in the lives of young children and who they will become as adults."

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When it comes to making a difference for Shasta County, First 5 Shasta remains at the forefront of investors dedicating money, energy, and expertise where it can do the most good - early childhood. This investment benefits the entire community for generations to come as children grow into successful students and productive adults. First 5 Shasta was established after California voters approved Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50-cent tax on tobacco to fund programs and activities that support early childhood development and school readiness. To date, First 5 Shasta has invested over \$25 million in local programs, services, and activities that benefit children ages 0-to-5. Learn more: [first5shasta.org](http://first5shasta.org)

### Shasta Children and Families Commission

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