

(Continued)

## ***TOP Early Learning Centers Help Beyond the Classroom***

Personal reasons prevented Elizabeth from being eligible for any funding through TOP Early Learning Centers, but TOP's enrollment coordinator, Soledad Delgado, offered Elizabeth a lifeline when she referred her to the Kansas Children's Service League. KCSL was then able to help fund Alissa's enrollment at TOP for a couple of months through their Crisis Nursery Program. "That gave me enough time to help Elizabeth work through her personal challenges and complete a Department of Children and Families application, making her eligible for financial assistance (half days) for childcare at TOP. It also allowed Alissa to continue in her current classroom at TOP uninterrupted," said Marliz Valles, TOP Family Service Coordinator. Elizabeth pays out of pocket for the remainder of Alissa's care at TOP.

"When Alissa started my class, she was shy and slow to warm up to new adults. Her mom had visited with us about Alissa not talking at home, and we noticed how she struggled to communicate in class," said one of Alissa's teachers, Miss Laura. "During our large group activities she would always walk away and didn't engage at all. When she needed assistance she would just come up to me or my assistant teacher and pull our clothes and point. She tried her best to communicate. We began to notice that in addition to having difficulty with speech, she also had an issue with processing spoken language."

Because of information obtained through the Ages and Stages Questionnaire Alissa's mother was asked to complete, TOP referred the child to USD 259 where she receives speech services for three hours every day during the school year.

Miss Marliz helped Elizabeth with all the paperwork needed to get the services and even accompanied her to the first meeting at the school, acting as her translator. She also prepped Elizabeth so she could find a full-time job with better pay, assisted her in finding a more economical home, and guided her through the approval process for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program during the winter months. Miss Laura reports, "Alissa has made a huge improvement with speech. She is able to express needs with two word expressions like 'help please' and 'want more'."

"If not for TOP, I wouldn't be able to work. TOP has helped in so many ways. I can go to work feeling like my daughter is safe there. I also like it because I know if I have any problems come up, Marliz will help me," said Elizabeth. "TOP is a good place. The kids learn a lot and have fun. I like the routine, how they have breakfast, studio time, play, and naptime. I would recommend TOP to others."