



**Moe Gaines** retired in December after 28 years with OFC. Below are a few of the staff who spoke at her farewell party: **Dana Haynes-Lovelace, Maria Elena Martinez** and **Abeba Tzeggai**.



## Goodbye Gaines

Most Office for Children staff who work in the Pennino Building would know her laugh anywhere. In December, after a 28-year career with Fairfax County government, **Moe Gaines** and her infectious laugh retired from OFC.

**Gaines** is a DC native who grew up in a singing family and ran a school-age residential camp before joining OFC in 1982. She spent nine years as a SACC teacher, and then directed the Head Start program, the Community Education and Provider Services program, and the SACC program.

“**Moe** has tremendous institutional knowledge about OFC programs and a sincere commitment to serving children, families and the child care community well. We are really going to miss her,” said OFC Director **Anne-Marie Twohie**. “However, **Moe** has played a key role in so many OFC programs and initiatives that her work will be an integral part of OFC for years to come.”

She led a Head Start school transition project in the ‘80s that was a precursor to OFC’s current school readiness work; she oversaw a major revision of the family child care ordinance in 2001, and began the revision process currently underway. **Moe** has led OFC’s diversity council, participated for years on the DFS strategic planning committee, and also oversaw OFC’s emergency preparedness plans.

**Evelyn Lopez** is a Head Start business analyst who worked with **Gaines** in Head Start in the ‘90s. “Her biggest strength is that she is forward-thinking. With **Moe**, it’s always about how we can make it better, and how we can do what we haven’t done before,” **Lopez** said. “You know how people always say they do things for the good of the families and the children? She really does.”

“When working with **Moe** in CEPS, I was always impressed with her focus on family child care providers’ perspective when looking at changes in policies and practices that would directly impact the providers,” said **Karle Finley**, who is now the Early Head Start family child care coordinator. “**Moe** approached issues in a thoughtful and practical way. And of course her sense of humor was always a big plus!”

**Maria Elena Martinez**, the CEPS program administrator, worked with **Gaines** for the past eight years. “I will miss our discussions, our laughter, and our mutual understanding of the lighter side of work and life,” **Martinez** said.



## Head Start at Dogwood

Funds granted through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act have made possible an expansion of the Early Head Start program into a second Fairfax County Public Schools site: Dogwood Elementary School in Reston. The Early Head Start program offers educational and social services to 0-3 year-olds and pregnant women from low-income families.

## Star Quality

The Office for Children is one of six community organizations in Virginia that has been selected by the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation and the Virginia Office of Early Childhood Development to participate in a pilot demonstration of the Virginia Star Quality Initiative for family child care homes. OFC currently works with child care centers in the VSQI program. This pilot expansion now gives the same opportunity for quality improvement to family child care providers.

During the family child care pilot, providers will be evaluated on these standard areas: their education, qualifications and training; their interactions with the

children in their care; how they have arranged their homes to best support child care and early learning; their curriculum planning and use, and program management. Research shows that child care programs that focus on improvements in these areas positively impact the children in their care.

In addition, participants will receive mentoring services and provide feedback on the process of participating in the pilot.

By testing the standard in communities throughout Virginia, the VECF and OECD will be able to evaluate the process prior to implementing it statewide.

## Child Care Chat



OFC Director **Anne-Marie Twohie**.

“Ask Fairfax” is a live, online discussion program that the county launched in October as a way for the public to communicate directly with agency experts. There have been about a dozen “Ask Fairfax” discussions so far, on topics ranging from bed bugs and burglaries to the county budget. Recently, the Office for Children was featured in an “Ask Fairfax” about choosing child care.

“It was a fascinating experience. This social media tool allowed us to offer important information to Fairfax County families in a new and interesting way,” said OFC Director **Anne-Marie Twohie**.

**Twohie** conferred with OFC program directors **Jennifer Branch, Moe Gaines, Anne Goldstein** and **Carol Keil**, as well as **Carol Osborne** and **Toya Bryant**, to answer the 19 questions that were submitted online. You can read the transcript of the resulting Q&A on the “Ask Fairfax” section of the county’s website at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov).

**Twohie** also recorded a one-minute summary statement that was posted on the county’s YouTube channel.

The Virginia Department of Social Services featured a link to the transcript and the video on their news blog. “Congratulations Fairfax County Department of Family Services/Office for Children for embracing technology and making it easier for the public to get more information on choosing quality child care,” the VDSS announcement read.

“I’d like to do another online discussion in the spring to talk about school readiness and encourage families to plan kindergarten visits,” **Twohie** said.

## OFC Turns 35

1975 was an auspicious year. Bill Gates founded Microsoft; the first woman reached the top of Mt. Everest; Arthur Ashe won Wimbledon, and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors established the Office for Children.

Over the past 35 years, the Office for Children has been recognized for its excellence by national, state and local organizations. This includes 11 National Association of Counties awards; an E-Gov Trailblazer for its website; and a joint resolution by the Virginia General Assembly honoring the organization’s service to the community.

More importantly, the Office for Children has impacted an estimated half-million children over the last three decades. This includes children enrolled in Office for Children programs, as well as children cared for by family child care providers and child care center staff who participate in Office for Children programs and initiatives.

**O F C** Office for Children



# Support for Male Involvement

The Office for Children's Head Start program offers special activities for men and children through its Male Involvement Program. Recently the Greater Mt. Vernon Community Head Start program received a \$500 contribution from PNC Bank, which also donated books and piggy banks to the program. PNC bank presented the check to representatives from the Male Involvement Program at the grand opening of PNC's Beacon Mall branch.

"The purpose of the Male Involvement Program is to promote male involvement in the development and well-being of children enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start," explained OFC Head Start Coordinator **Anne Taggart**. "It's not just about how much time children spend with their fathers or father figures, but the quality of interaction. Strong relationships with adult male role models contribute to children's positive adjustment, and support their ability to learn."

"Fathers who have children enrolled in Greater Mt. Vernon Community Head Start are members of the Male Involvement Program," **Anne Taggart** said. "All men who are concerned with the positive development of young children are welcome to participate in the program. This includes friends, relatives and neighbors of Head Start families."



**PNC donates \$500 to Head Start's Male Involvement Program.**

According to the National Fatherhood Initiative, children who have adult males involved in their lives do better in school, have higher self-esteem, and are less likely to use drugs and engage in criminal activity than children who do not.

"The Male Involvement Program has life-long benefits for children," **Taggart** said.

## ECCC Chosen for Teaching Video



Recently, Charlottesville-based Teachstone, Inc. selected the Office for Children's Employees' Child Care Center as one of the locations to use in their upcoming training video for early education professionals. "Teachstone was looking for exceptional infant classrooms around the U.S. that could be filmed in the production of a new training series," explained Karen Quist, who oversees the ECCC.

Teachstone was cofounded by Bob Pianta from the University of Virginia. Professor Pianta created the Classroom Assessment Scoring System observation tool used in the Virginia Star Quality Initiative.

"As we talked through Teachstone's intent, it was clear that ECCC would be an excellent resource for them. Teachstone was especially appreciative of the diversity of our teaching staff," Quist said.



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