

## Staying Connected



A few months ago **Nannette Bowler** asked DFS staff for feedback about her performance as our agency director. After reading the survey responses, she reported that, "The strongest message from you was that it is important that I stay connected with staff in all of our DFS offices. Specific suggestions included making periodic visits to the regional offices and 'walking a mile in your shoes' to experience, up close, what your day-to-day work is like."

To respond to this feedback, **Bowler** scheduled regional meetings to talk with staff about key events, questions, issues and projects in the department and the county.

A number of Office for Children staff attended **Bowler's** February 14 meeting at the Pennino Building. She discussed staff development and DFS initiatives.



After the meeting, **Bowler** visited the SACC center at Eagle View Elementary School as part of her efforts to work alongside staff and have a first-hand experience of a work site. Since it was a warm day, she spent time outside with the children (pictured above), then went inside where she observed the children participating in a robotics project and making friendship pins.

**Bowler** plans to have quarterly regional meetings, and have different "walk a mile" experiences with DFS divisions each quarter.

## OFC Partners With Associations

One of the ways the Office for Children supports the professional development of family child care providers is by encouraging them to join a national or local child care association. Associations help child care providers by offering training, referrals and networking opportunities.

"It's very helpful for providers to get to know other child care professionals," said **Desiree Henry**, an education specialist with Community Education and Provider Services. **Henry** is OFC's liaison with local child care associations. "Joining an association gives providers a place to get advice and support while building relationships."

**Henry** and other OFC staff meet with Fairfax County family child care associations bi-annually. The meetings give representatives from the associations a chance to hear updates about OFC programs, policies, upcoming events and training opportunities. At the same time, OFC staff solicit input on ways OFC can enhance services for providers.

There are currently 11 family child care associations active in Fairfax County. They are listed on OFC's website, and in materials distributed to providers.



# School Readiness Community Collaborative Council

The Fairfax County School Readiness Council was formed by the Office for Children in 2006 to bring the community together to support children’s school readiness. The School Readiness Community Collaborative Council is instrumental in supporting county efforts to help make sure children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

The council facilitates collaboration among community organizations, county agencies, public schools, families, family child care providers and child care center staff. The goal is for all partners to work together to ensure children have smooth transitions from child care to school.

These organizations are represented on the council:

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Annandale Christian Community for Action Child Development Center | Fairfax County Public Schools   | Northern Virginia Community College         |
| City of Fairfax   | Fairfax Futures   | Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center |
| Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development    | Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board Infant and Toddler Connection | Virginia Child Care Association             |
| Fairfax County Health Department                                  | Healthy Families Fairfax  | Voices for Virginia’s Children              |
| Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services  | Laurel Learning Center/Reston Interfaith                                    | Wolf Trap                                   |
| Fairfax County Public Library                                     | Northern Virginia Association for the Education of Young Children           | ZERO TO THREE                               |

## Head Start Interns

Each year, through a partnership with Virginia Tech, the Office for Children’s Head Start program benefits from having interns, who are studying to become registered dietitians, spend a month helping Head Start teachers, families and child care providers explore nutrition information and activities. This year’s interns were **Rachel Miller** and **Hannah Barker**. Their accomplishments included:

Teaching a class for Head Start children focusing on the importance of physical activity during the winter months;

Helping Early Head Start nutritionists assess the nutritional status of participating children;

Sharing information with parents on how to buy healthy food on a limited budget;

Performing growth assessments with underweight and overweight children;

Revising the infant feeding guidelines for the Early Head Start teachers.

Both interns gained first-hand experience; learned the components of the USDA meal pattern for preschoolers, and reviewed Head Start menus

for vitamin content, choking hazards and variety.

“We’re so grateful to have interns each year,” said Head Start Nutritionist **Everludis Lopez**. “They’re so creative and enthusiastic! We really appreciate the opportunity to work with them.”



# Seniors Visit SACC

In 2009, the Floris SACC center began a partnership with seniors from the Herndon Senior Center by having the children and seniors send letters, cards, crafts and tasty treats back and forth. In 2010, the seniors visited Floris for the first time. The visit was such a success that future visits were planned.

“During one visit we watched a classic movie that the seniors had all seen, but some of the children had not. It was heartwarming to see seniors and children sharing popcorn and enjoying the afternoon together!” said Floris SACC Teacher **Tasha Stanton**.

Adults from the senior center visited Floris again during a teacher workday this winter. Kindergarteners read stories to their guests; players of all ages bowled on the Wii, and participants enjoyed inter-generational games of Uno and Scrabble. “Our friends from the senior center remarked on how much fun they had during their visit, a remark echoed by the children and staff at Floris SACC,” **Stanton** stated.



## School Readiness and Minority Achievement

**O F C** Office for Children



Investing in School Readiness

Office for Children Director **Anne-Marie Twohie** and Fairfax Futures Executive Director **Dalissa Vargas** were guest panelists, along with Fairfax County Public Schools Early Childhood

Coordinator Maura Burke, at a recent Minority Student Achievement Oversight Committee meeting in Falls Church. MSAOC is a School Board advisory committee addressing FCPS programs, policies and strategies that affect minority student achievement.

MSAOC members recognize that access to preschool programs is critical to closing the achievement gap in schools. At their recent meeting, the panel members addressed the challenges in keeping pace with the growth of Fairfax County families with low incomes, and how the county and FCPS are working together to ensure that children receive quality child care and preschool

experiences that prepare them to start kindergarten ready to succeed.

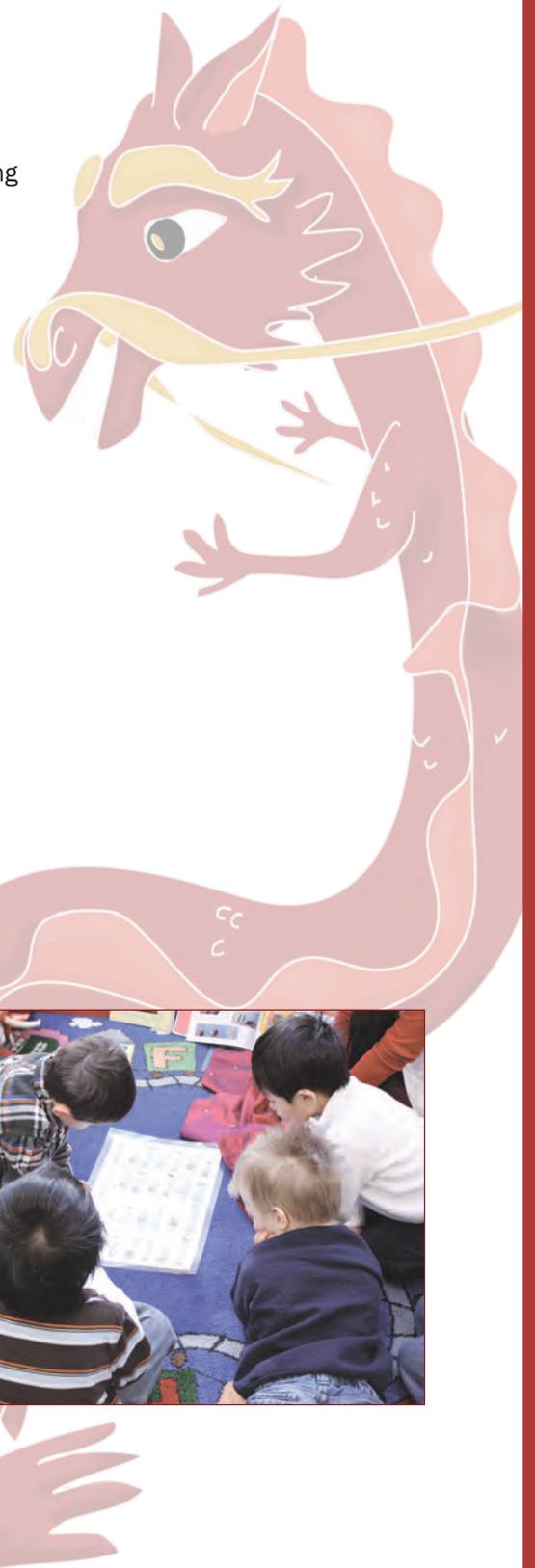
**Twohie** and Burke discussed the county’s Early Head Start and Head Start programs, as well as a number of school readiness initiatives that OFC and FCPS partner on, such as: Fairfax Futures’ Neighborhood School Readiness Teams.

“Fairfax Futures’ Neighborhood School Readiness Teams create a unique partnership that surrounds families in traditionally underserved communities to help prepare children to successfully transition into kindergarten,” **Vargas** said.

She added, “Our annual School Readiness Symposium, in partnership with OFC and the public schools, allows family child care providers, and kindergarten and Early Head Start teachers to come together for a shared professional development opportunity that supports quality early childhood education.”

## ECCC Rings in the Lunar New Year

Children at the Employees' Child Care Center rang in the Lunar New Year by painting a Chinese dragon, making traditional lanterns, listening to a story and learning about Chinese writing.



**O F C** Office for Children

This employee newsletter is published by the Office for Children, a division of the Fairfax County Dept. of Family Services. If you have any questions, contact Lois Kirkpatrick at 703-324-7162 or Nancy McDonough at 703-324-8042. [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc).



A Fairfax County, VA  
Publication



Reasonable accommodations made upon request; call 703-324-7162 or TTY 711.