

CEPS Hosts Nutrition Fair



Community Education and Provider Services celebrated National Nutrition Month by hosting the 3rd annual Food and Nutrition Fair for Pennino Building employees. Attendees learned about making healthy food choices; enjoyed a demonstration by a local chef making vegetable dishes; participated in activities such as yoga and Zumba; and donated canned food to the community food pantry Food for Others. The event was cosponsored by Wegman's, Whole Foods, Head Start, the DFS Adult and Aging division, the Virginia Extension Service and the county's Live Well program.



Head Start — Read Across America Day

More than 25 volunteers shared books with children at the Greater Mt. Vernon Community Head Start program as part of the national Read Across America event, which celebrates Dr. Seuss's birthday. Participants included members of a local Kiwanis club, SACC teachers, parents, and members of Head Start's Male Involvement program.



A volunteer from the Mt. Vernon Kiwanis Club at Head Start's Read Across American event.

Retirees Reach Back

Former Office for Children staff who've successfully completed their careers can be important mentors to current employees. Here's a roundup of advice about working for OFC from seven recent retirees.



Gail Bjorklund
Former School Readiness Coordinator

Certainly one of my suggestions would be to start

by learning as much as possible about the agency as a whole.

Take advantage of opportunities to work on projects that bring multiple divisions together.

Another, somewhat obvious, suggestion would be to make a strong effort to do the best you can at your assigned responsibilities. If fellow employees respect the work you do, it can open many doors and will also go a long way in making you enjoy your work.



Dan Dildine
Former Communications Specialist

I'd advise a new staff member to look for mentors they respect and

who share their knowledge freely. If you're lucky (like me), that mentor is a boss or a team member.



Moe Gaines
Former Director of CEPS

Remember that we work with children and parents, not clients

or customers. "Customers" don't have faces, and "clients" sounds clinical. Remembering that we work with children and parents keeps the human element. Our folks have faces and feelings.



Panzie Johnson
Former SACC Regional Supervisor

Be open to new experiences and consistently grow your knowledge, skills and

relationships. Be a good listener and communicate effectively. Get to know people, volunteer on projects and take relevant training to support good performance and enjoyment. However, using your training to grow your job skills is most important.



Sharon Glynn
Former IFEL Director

I think my advice would be to find out all you can about the other divisions

within OFC. When I first came to the agency there was an orientation to familiarize me to all the divisions but, at the time, I was too focused on my own job and my own particular department to be ready to absorb information about others. I think if there was more understanding of others' roles, there could be some significant cooperation.

The child care professionals who came to training helped me grow professionally and personally. They helped me gain empathy. Working with them challenged me to dig deep and uncover my own creativity and knowledge. When you have participants in a class who represent 20 or so different cultures and a wide range of experiences and education, you can't help but absorb a deeper understanding of the value of diversity.



Judith Rosen
Former OFC Director

It's a great thing to work for the county because what you do, and

how you do it, you can base on the needs of the citizenry, whom you know. It's a wonderful thing to be working as part of the community. You're making a difference.

If you really believe in something, the county is very open to new ideas. It really can be done – that's exciting! But you have to get allies and follow through – it doesn't just happen.



Sybil Tolleson
Former CCAR Business Analyst

I really believed in the mission of OFC and thoroughly enjoyed working

there for 20-plus years. Please know that the staff is here to help you and want you to be successful in your new position. Please ask questions and allow them to support you.

Secondly, learn all the things you possibly can about your job and then strive to always try to improve. Don't be afraid to volunteer for committee assignments or extra tasks. OFC is a team and teams need all their members supporting and working their mission.

Try to spend some time getting to know other agencies you might have to interact with in completing your job tasks. Remember, we are all here to support and help the same families. Think what you might accomplish with all the other agencies working together to make the family's life better.

Lastly, never let the job become mundane to you. What you do is important and may affect families' lives in ways you may never know.

Supporting Quality Care

The Community Education and Provider Services staff have completed the pilot phase of their Supporting Quality in Family Child Care project. For more than a year, CEPS child care specialists have worked to develop consistency in how they help family child care professionals enhance the quality of care they provide to children.

Staff focused on four key components of child care: (1) the way child care providers interact with children and their parents; (2) personal care routines, including nap time, meals and snacks; (3) the space, furnishings and equipment used for child care; and (4) the activities and learning experiences offered to children.

CEPS staff have examined each of these components; analyzed what constitutes quality for each component, and created a plan for how to help child care providers enhance the quality of each component.

Each of the 13 child care specialists worked with a family child care provider who agreed to participate in the project. The specialists conducted pre- and post-project documentation to show the effect the project had on each child care program.

“The results were significant,” said CEPS Education Specialist **Cindy Gonzales**, who, along with **Maria Elena Martinez, Desiree Henry, Michael Asihene** and **Maria Gallagher**, served as mentors to participating specialists. They were also part of the project work group that included **Kamini Jassal, Sharon Gamache, Patricia Jordan** and **Marilyn Frost**.

The project is one of several efforts to standardize the information and assistance given to family child care providers by staff who make home visits. A related event took place a few weeks ago, when more than 40 staff attended CEPS’ cross-program meeting with child care specialists from Child Care Assistance and Referral, the Infant-Toddler Specialist Network, the Virginia Preschool Initiative and Head Start.

As a result of that meeting, participants have begun documenting their visits with child care providers in a shared computer application.

“The same child care providers interact with specialists from several different OFC divisions, and now that we’ve all started using the same notes field on the computer to track what we do, it helps standardize the way we’re cross-divisionally working with providers,” **Gonzales** explained.



Systems of Care

Recently, Office for Children senior staff and managers attended a special briefing on the county’s new Systems of Care initiative. The briefing was a result of Deputy County Executive Pat Harrison’s request to the directors of human services agencies to make sure employees are aware of the new initiative.

Systems of Care will be the approach used by all Fairfax County employees who serve families whose children are: intellectually or physically disabled; in need of foster care; recovering from substance abuse; homeless; at risk; or in the criminal justice system.

In the Systems of Care approach, families partner with county agencies, schools and community organizations to develop solutions to their challenges.

In the Systems of Care approach, staff recognize that families have valuable information and resources to contribute. Systems of Care is a collaborative approach, with the goal of helping families remain as intact and connected to their communities as possible.

OFC staff who have their supervisor’s permission to take the workshop about this initiative can attend “Transitioning Into a Systems of Care Approach” on Thursday, April 21 at 9 a.m. in Pennino room 206. The training is recommended for human services employees.

SACC Skills Up for Spring

Last month, SACC teachers learned about letterboxing, orienteering and geocaching in order to share their new skills with children in SACC's spring program, which will run from April 18-22.

Letterboxes are small, weatherproof treasure boxes that are hidden in places like public parks.

Orienteering is a sport in which participants use maps and compasses to navigate from point to point along an unfamiliar course. Geocaching is a high-tech scavenger hunt where participants find objects using a GPS device.

"Children will go from using

low-tech tools

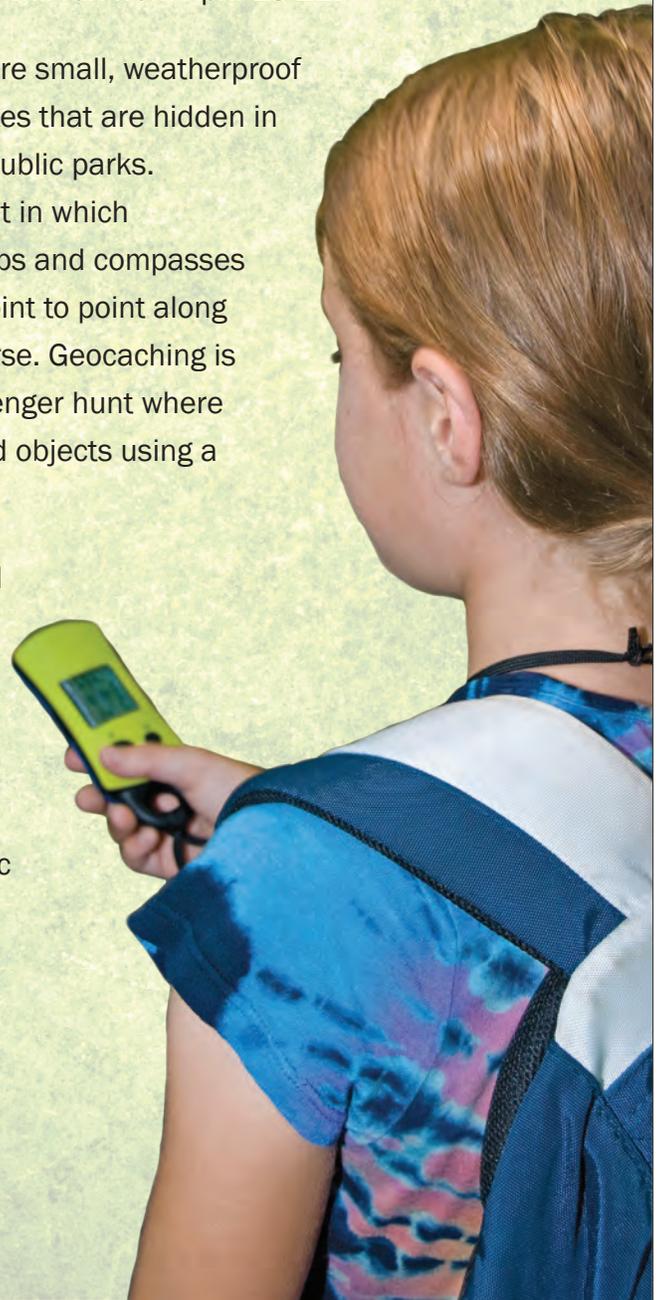
with letterboxing to high-tech

tools with geocaching," said SACC

Program Administrator **Beth Leggat**. "This is a fantastic opportunity for the children, because everybody loves a treasure hunt. And geocaching is very popular right now."

SACC's spring program also has a literacy component.

Children will have the opportunity for creative expression through music, song, dance, skits, games and other literacy-related activities.



O F C Office for Children

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