

Shopping Matters

The Office for Children's Head Start Program has received a grant supporting the Shopping Matters Project, an initiative of the national nonprofit organization Share Our Strength. The grant will allow the Greater Mt. Vernon Community Head Start Program's Nutrition Consultant, **Jessica Forsty**, to offer grocery store tours and learning activities to parents whose children are enrolled in Head Start.

During the tours, parents will learn how to make healthy, economical food choices when grocery shopping for their families. **Forsty** will help participants become more knowledgeable about food labels, unit prices, whole grains and healthy recipes.

"We really like to emphasize to our families and community that eating healthy is very important, not only for the children but for their entire family. The 'Shopping Matters' project will let the families learn more about how eating healthy on a budget can be easy," **Forsty** says.

Proper nutrition is a building block of school readiness. Eating recommended portions of healthy food supports brain function and development, and assists children's physical and emotional growth. OFC's registered dietitians work to make sure children receive nutritious meals and snacks while in care.



Staff Development

The Department of Family Services Staff Development Work Group is an offshoot of the Lines of Service project that began in 2009. **Karen Quist**, the director of the Office for Children's Institute for Early Learning, and **Lawrence Clark**, a School Age Child Care program administrator, represent OFC on the work group. It's working on ways to help all staff:

- Value professional development and take responsibility for their own learning;
- Embrace innovative learning opportunities;
- Access the knowledge and skills needed to provide the best service possible;

- Connect learning to their work and the department's mission.

Learning maps are one of the initiatives the group will focus on in 2012. Learning maps inform new employees (and employees promoted to supervisory positions) about work-related policies, procedures and expectations. This includes everything from sign-in/sign-out procedures, conference room scheduling, and ordering supplies, to expectations about timeliness, confidentiality and professionalism when interacting with coworkers.

"In any work environment, there are some things staff are left to figure out on their own. But it's hard for staff to meet expectations if they missed the email that had the information, or don't know the right person to ask, or where to find the instructions. Learning maps take the randomness out of the process and help employees become successful in their jobs more quickly," **Quist** explains.

Some divisions are already using learning maps, and others will adopt them later in the year. The Staff Development Work Group is also creating a Supervisory Institute, which will help ensure consistent application of policies across the organization.

Scenes From Winter SACC



Staff Talents Enhance OFC

Most of us perform our work using knowledge gained from training and education programs, and skills sharpened by on-the-job experience. Some of us are also able to share our personal talents and passions to enhance Office for Children programs.



For example, **Joanne Kennedy**, an Employees' Child Care Center teacher, learned about gardening while working seasonal jobs at Meadows Farms Nurseries. When the large pine tree in front of the Pennino Building was cut down, **Kennedy** used the space to make a butterfly garden with the children.

Several gardens have been added since, and she shows the children how to maintain them.

"There is so much children can learn from gardening, such as the life cycles of nature, seasons, insects, animals and plants," **Kennedy** says.

Asha Singh was a yoga instructor in India who now works in the Dranesville School Age Child Care center. **Singh** is also one of SACC's "Hands-On Fridays" trainers. These workshops allow SACC staff to share their passions with other SACC teachers, who can then use the skills to create learning experiences for children.

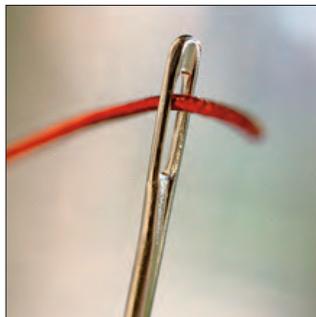
Singh shows SACC teachers how to do yoga activities with children. "Children feel happy and peaceful after doing yoga," she says.

Laura Wimer shares her passion for quilting with her colleagues.

"I learned to make quilts with my grandmother when I was very young,"

Wimer recalls. "Children love to sew, and it's an important life skill to learn." The West

Springfield SACC teacher shows other SACC staff how children learn about history, community and family through quilting.



Juanita Lazo is an Early Head Start child care specialist. For years, she's used her passion for interior decorating to help friends and relatives redesign rooms

in their homes. Now she uses it to help family child care providers create safe and engaging child care environments.

"I show providers how to use the furniture and equipment they already have, and rearrange it to make it an appropriate space for child care," **Lazo** says.

Maria Gallagher is an instructor in OFC's Institute for Early Learning. "Storytelling," one of her most popular classes, shows child care professionals how to create stories to help develop children's language and literacy skills. Telling stories to her own children was a favorite **Gallagher** family pastime.

"When my twins were about 3 years old, we made up stories together while we were waiting for their older sister to finish soccer practice," **Gallagher** says. "We did that for years. The twins, now in middle school, often remember and laugh about the stories we created together."

Jason Northrop, a teacher at Oak View SACC, caught the movie-making bug as a child. He now offers video production classes to SACC teachers.



"In my second year in SACC, I created my first movie with kids, and I knew this was something I needed to share with other teachers," he explains. "Children always love filmmaking! They love the sharing of ideas and watching those ideas come to life."

Kathy Neylon is the administrative assistant for IFEL. "I have had a camera for as long as I can remember," **Neylon** says. Her passion for photography has been used to make OFC's Resource Center a welcoming and attractive place for child care professionals attending IFEL courses.

"I had taken photos we used in an IFEL training event about nature, so we chose photos from that slide show, had enlargements made, and framed them."

Neylon and the other employees in this article are just a few examples of OFC staff who use outside skills and interests to enhance their work with child care professionals and children enrolled in OFC programs.

Length of Service

Fairfax County recognizes staff who have reached service milestones of 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 or more years of employment with the county. Here are Office for Children staff who reached milestones in 2011.

10 Years

Teena Marie Alfaro
Cheryl Denice Bailey
Sallay Musu Banya
Hemlata Bargoti
Jemar Lemont Bellfield
Jennifer Belinda Branch
Tammy Brewer
Shawna Burwell
Elsa Calderon
Brenda Carter
Kelvin Renard Claytor
Elisabeth Closter
Mariama Balde Diallo
Beth Eadie
Eugenia Ijeoma Ejim
Entisar Hashim Elsafi
Nathaniel Epkin
Richard Fatherree
Ericka Ferguson
Wilhelmenia Martin Francis
Tracy Anne Lees Gibson
Barbara Greer
Nirmal Gupta
Felicia Hairston

Dana Haynes
Niki Levette Henry
Nancy Jane Holsopple
Lynne Hornick
Lynn Hotchkiss
Sherry Annette Jackson
Megan Holak Layton
Tomeko Kim Le Vere-Stevens
Robert Ann Legree
Elena Lesage
Dorothy Livingstone
Evelyn Lopez
Kimberly Lyons
Catherine Martin
Lucinda Mastantuono

15 Years

Latasha McClain
Angel Beth Miller
Linda Miller
Lasondra Moore
Deborah Joan Nasco
Roselyn Neal
Tracey Lynne Neal
Tonya Lynn Nolen
Mary Patterson

Tanya Faye Pullman
Kristi Marie Redwine
Patricia Rice
Luz Mercedes Rivera

20 Years

Glenda Lisseth Rosado
Rhonda Cheryl Ross
Asha Singh
Steven Snyder
Jennifer Anne Stryker
Donyell Trapp

25 Years

Lorraine Turner
Norman Powell White
Christine Whiting
Sonya Yvonne Willis
Laura Belle Wimer
Rhianna Mae Wright

30 Years

Keodavong Zelaya