

## Child Care Professionals Recognized by the Board of Supervisors

At their July 10 meeting the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors recognized county child care professionals and their work.

Members of the county's Child Care Advisory Council and child care professionals from the community came before the board for the recognition.

The group included family child care providers, child care center and preschool staff, Head Start and



Virginia Preschool Initiative program staff, School Age Child Care program staff and members of the Northern Virginia Association for the Education of Young Children.

This followed the board's earlier proclamation of Child Care Professionals Week in Fairfax County, May 6-12. Noting that child care professionals in Fairfax County work in more than 2,200 family child care homes and more than 500 centers

and preschools, the board's proclamation states: "the early care and education experiences provided by child care professionals prepare children for ongoing success in school and in life."

The Office for Children is honored to work in partnership with child care professionals and teachers and appreciates all that they do each day to care for the children of Fairfax County.



## New Case Management System for CCAR

OFC's Child Care Assistance and Referral Program administers the county's child care subsidy program which is funded with a combination of federal, state and local dollars. This past year, the Virginia Department of Social Services launched the Virginia Child Care Management System, a new state-wide automated case management system.

This summer CCAR staff began using the state's VaCMS for case management of families receiving state subsidies. In the months prior CCAR staff transitioned the families'

records from our system to VaCMS. According to CCAR Director Carol Keil, "The new state system is needed, and we support the change. Though it increases our workload in the short term, there are great benefits statewide."

As part of VaCMS, on Aug. 1, VDSS launched the use of Electronic Child Care System swipe cards for payment. Parents are required to swipe their card through a reader at their child's center or family child care home each day to record their child's attendance. Reimbursements for state-funded children in the subsidy program now come directly from VDSS.

CCAR has been working with providers and families to help them get ready to use the swipe card, reaching out through informational letters, holding nine regional informational and training meetings, and participating in town halls sponsored by the swipe card vendor.

"We appreciate the flexibility of the community child care programs who have partnered with us to bring this new system online" Keil said. "I also appreciate staff's efforts to make this as seamless a transition as possible for providers and families, and we will continue to be available to answer questions or handle concerns."

# How Does Your Garden Grow?

In an effort to educate children about nutritious foods, Greater Mount Vernon Community Head Start has planted a garden.

Prior to beginning work on their garden, teachers and children enjoyed reading books about gardens such as “The Carrot Seed,” and “Tasting the Alphabet.” Head Start children, teachers and families also visited Green Spring Gardens in Alexandria, Virginia. Garden staff introduced children to local plants and wildlife, and the group discussed the life cycle of a plant. Green Spring Gardens provided children with seedlings to transplant into the school garden.

On May 16, Thomas Collins, the program’s facilities/transportation specialist, with the help of parents from Head Start’s Male Involvement Program, broke ground on the garden. The program’s Male Involvement group provides opportunities for fathers and significant males to enhance their relationship with their children and families through interaction in Head Start activities, both within the center and off-site.

Children and teachers transferred lettuce, green onions, tomatoes, green beans, squash, strawberries, sunflowers, and an assortment of herbs into the newly cultivated garden. As the garden has flourished, children and teachers have been using the fresh fruits and vegetables to make nutritious snacks.

“We are very excited about this initiative.” said Head Start Coordinator Anne Taggart. “Head Start programs have a wonderful opportunity to encourage a tendency toward healthy lifestyle choices that could help prevent childhood obesity.” Taggart continued, “We hope to plant the seeds in each child’s mind that will blossom into a lifetime of healthier eating.”



## Korean Delegation Visits Head Start



On July 10, Greater Mount Vernon Community Head Start hosted a 20-member delegation from the Republic of Korea. These officials administer a program similar to Head Start, called Dream Start. Dream Start is offered through the Korean Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs. Their program was first established in 2007 with the goal of bringing much needed services to children and families with low incomes. Dream Start provides services in the areas of health, child care and welfare.

As the administrators of the program, this delegation came to the US to visit Head Start facilities to learn ways to enhance their existing program. The delegation was welcomed by Head Start staff and taken on a tour of the classrooms and playground, where visiting officials enjoyed interacting with children in pretend play, literacy activities, story time and much more. "We were grateful for this opportunity to share some of our best practices with the delegation. We truly enjoyed having them," said Claudine Christie, Head Start education administrator.

## SACC Camp Discovery Partners with Fire & Rescue

SACC Camp Discovery children and staff were excited to have the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department's "Every Step of the Way Program" return to SACC centers to conduct their Fire Safety Relay series. For the past several years, this summer event has reinforced fire safety with active participation from children and SACC teachers. Each relay emphasized important concepts such as crawl low and go, escaping from fire, and emergency phone calls.

Firefighters from first duty stations attended to cheer on the teams, which gave children a great chance to interact with these community helpers. The firefighters also helped the children with some of the more challenging aspects of the relays, such as putting on and taking off fire fighting gear for the firefighter rescue relay.

"Fires can happen anywhere, so it is important for the children to be prepared," said Olde Creek SACC supervisor Angel Miller. "After the relays we encourage the children to talk to their parents about establishing escape routes at home."

Four Life Safety Education specialists comprise the team that brings this program to summer SACC centers. As a member of Life Safety Education since 2005, Wyleng Liew said "It's always a pleasure partnering with SACC. I've been able to see these educational opportunities make a huge impact, and we thank everyone for their support and enthusiasm!"



# Shooting for the Stars



Teachers and children participated in the Wolf Trap Residency learning new strategies to integrate content knowledge into the arts.

## Center-based

- Education, Qualifications, and Training (assessed by documentation)
- Interactions (assessed by observation)
- Structure (assessed by documentation)
- Environment and Instruction (assessed by observation and documentation)

Based on the initial rating each program receives, a Quality Improvement Plan is created by the child care center or family child care provider with assistance from their mentor. Each mentor assists and supports programs as they put strategies in place to work towards the goals identified in the QIP. Mentors are from the Office for Children, Fairfax County Public Schools and Infant Toddler Family Day Care of No. VA, Inc.

Seventeen center-based programs; four Family Early Childhood Education Program/Head Start classrooms in the FCPS and 11 family child care providers are currently participating in the Fairfax County project.

Programs are rated every two years on a continuous improvement cycle. For more information about this program, visit the Smart Beginnings website at [www.smartbeginnings.org](http://www.smartbeginnings.org)

The Office for Children continues to coordinate the Virginia Star Quality Initiative in Fairfax County. VSQI is a state-wide rating system designed to sustain and improve quality at participating early child care and education programs.

VSQI gives center-based programs and family child care homes a quality rating based on a five star system. A center that receives a 1 star rating is in good standing with the requirements of the appropriate regulating authority. Each additional star indicates providers of centers have incrementally improved the quality of care above the requirement in their locality. After the initial rating, each program implements improvements before they are rated again two years later.

Family child care and center-based programs are rated on four standards:

## Family Child Care

- Education, Qualifications, and Training (assessed by documentation)
- Environment and Interactions (assessed by observation)
- Structure (assessed by observation)
- Parent Partnerships and Transition Practices (assessed by documentation)



Children learn to use materials in a variety of new ways.

**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 Angela Morlu at 703-324-7528 or Nancy McDonough at 703-324-8042. [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc).



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