

Neighborhood School Readiness Teams Symposium

The Office for Children hosted its first Annual Neighborhood School Readiness Teams Symposium on Monday, Oct. 22. More than 150 members of Neighborhood School Readiness Teams who work in 13 communities throughout Fairfax County attended to begin planning their work for the school year.

NSRTs are a collaborative partnership between the Office for Children, Fairfax County Public Schools and Fairfax Futures to support children's successful transition to kindergarten.

This half-day workshop began with remarks by Fairfax County Public School's Deputy Superintendent Robert Moniuszko, Deputy County Executive Pat Harrison, Fairfax Futures' Executive Director Dalissa Vargas and School Readiness Coordinator Betsi Closter.

NSRTs bring together individuals from the community, non-profits, local government and public schools with a common goal of supporting children as they reach their full potential as successful adults. The NSRT program is based on research that shows there are four areas of each child's life that determine development: individual characteristics, family background, school and neighborhood. When there

are challenges in these areas additional efforts to support school success can improve a child's outcome.

The symposium gave teams the opportunity to come together and learn about the research that supports their work. Jennifer LaCosale-Crouch, of the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education was the featured presenter and facilitated discussion within

the teams. She took them through a three-part exercise in which they first discussed their most successful past initiatives, brainstormed ideas for this year, and selected a few areas of focus.

The work varies greatly from team to team based on the needs of their own neighborhood. Some

teams' work could be focused around increasing timely kindergarten registration, family engagement, supporting those children most at risk in the community or appropriate experiences for children before they get to kindergarten. While other teams may also focus on family involvement with schools and

community groups to ensure children receive the network of support they need to be ready for school and beyond.

OFC Director Anne-Marie Twohie and FCPS Early Childhood Curriculum and Grant Management Coordinator Maura Burke, gave closing remarks thanking the teams for the work they have begun and the impact it will have.

Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc for more information about how NSRTs support children's transitions to school.



School Age Child Care Celebrates Lights On Afterschool



Every year, our community, and thousands of communities nationwide celebrate Lights On Afterschool to recognize the importance of afterschool programs that keep our kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families.

Governor Bob McDonnell officially proclaimed Thursday, Oct. 18, 2012, as Lights On Afterschool Day in Virginia, and the U.S. Senate unanimously passed a bipartisan resolution recognizing Lights On Afterschool celebrations and the importance of afterschool programs to kids, parents and communities.

SACC centers throughout Fairfax County celebrated Lights on Afterschool that afternoon. Creative activities supported the SACC 2012-2013 curriculum Kaleidoscope of the Arts: Creativity from Every Angle.



In the Centreville area SACC programs at London Towne and Virginia Run Elementary Schools showcased performing arts through dance parties and singing.



Children at Deer Park SACC used their artistic skills to decorate pumpkins.

In partnership with Providence Elementary School, the school's on-site SACC program invited all of the school's



students to attend their event from 5 - 6:30 p.m. The SACC center staff guided children in a variety of fun art experiences. Basic school supplies were distributed to children who attended, thanks to a donation by Team Breezy from the Symphonic Love Foundation, a charitable organization that supports and creates arts programs for youth while encouraging everyday public service, respect and kindness.

Other SACC programs including McNair in Herndon, and Newington Forest in Springfield, stimulated the children's creativity with neon/glow parties and games. SACC programs including Chesterbrook in McLean, Bren Mar and Groveton in Alexandria, Lemon Road in Falls Church, and Eagle View in Fairfax celebrated Lights on Afterschool with cooking projects, origami, oil painting and more. Some locations hosted parent open house events.

Head Start Students Receive New Coats Thanks to the Fire Department

Wednesday, Oct. 24, at Penn Daw, Fire Station 11, 3,000 coats were given to children in the Gum Springs area and throughout Fairfax County. Children from Greater Mount Vernon Head Start were on hand to receive coats that day. Anne Taggart, director at Gum Springs, said, "We are grateful that children in our program were able to benefit from the generosity of others. Having a warm coat can satisfy a child's basic need for comfort, which allows the child to be less distracted by worry and more engaged in learning."

Captain Willie Bailey of the Fairfax County Fire Department spent a lot of time in the Gum Springs area as he was growing up. After serving in the military he returned as a firefighter along the Route 1 corridor. Often when responding to calls, he would see children with no coats or toys.

Bailey remembers vividly that he did not receive his first new coat until he was in high school. That memory of being cold when he was young motivated

him to help change that reality for other children. Approximately 15 years ago, Bailey and Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department worked with a local church and Gum Springs Head Start to provide coats for 50-60 children.

"At the time, I thought it would be a one-time event," said Bailey with a chuckle, "I guess the man upstairs had other plans." Now each year Penn Daw Fire Station 11 is the Fire Department's hub for distributing donations. Bailey said, "Firefighters and volunteers from all over the county get involved."

The Fire Department works with Operation Warm to provide 3,000 coats that are sent through 55 schools, shelters and non-profit organizations in Fairfax County and neighboring jurisdictions to children who need them. Social workers, teachers and counselors like those in our Head Start program are involved in matching items to the children in need. Through corporate donations in August 3000 children receive backpacks and school supplies. In December they will receive toys.

Taggart said, "This program has had extraordinary growth in the past 15 years. We are glad to be able to work with Captain Bailey to bring these gifts to the children in Head Start."

Bailey said, "We firefighters do this job because we love helping people. This is just another way for us to give back to the community around us."



Captain Bailey helps the children try on their new coats.



Football Rules!

Monday, Nov. 5, more than 1,000 children participated in the SACC Flag Football League tournaments held at 13 SACC centers throughout Fairfax County. Throughout the fall, SACC staff coaches at participating SACC centers worked with the children on football fundamentals and skill development. The Nov. 5, student holiday provided the opportunity for teams from different centers to come together at a host site and participate in a series of three games.

The Flag Football League started out with just three teams in 2005 and has grown over the last seven years to 71 teams. The league has given SACC children the opportunity to develop important life skills such as teamwork, sportsmanship, cooperation, commitment and leadership in a safe, caring and nurturing environment. The league has also provided exciting experiences for the children, both on the field and in the classroom.



Fall Fun

Children from Greater Mount Vernon Community Head Start enjoyed a field trip to Cox Farm during Head Start Body Smart's "Take it Outside Week," Oct. 14-21. The children had the opportunity to go on hayrides, slip down a number of giant slides, jump from a rope swing onto a soft cushion, and see and touch animals in the petting zoo. The children and teachers all had a great time getting outside!

O F C Office for Children



A Fairfax County, VA Publication

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.



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