

## Head Start School Readiness Institute



Jessica Forsty and Debra O'Farrell presented the "9-5-2-1-0 Campaign."

Recently more than 300 Head Start staff from Fairfax County Public Schools, Higher Horizons Day Care Center and Office for Children came together for the Head Start School Readiness Institute. The conference theme was exploring "The Science and Practice of Early Learning" in the context of school readiness. Ellen Galinsky, author of "Mind in the Making," gave the keynote speech about executive functioning. A panel of regional and national experts extended the conversation about school readiness, making intentional connections to important topics such as health, diversity, family engagement and technology.

Following the keynote address and expert panel discussion, staff was encouraged to network and share

successes through topical poster presentations, and roundtable discussions. There were more than 30 lively discussion groups on topics as varied as music, movement, and dance; recognizing and supporting children and families who have been exposed to domestic violence; and technology in the classroom. The groups provided an opportunity to dialogue with other Head Start staff about challenges and successful strategies.

The 15 poster presentations were very well received. OFC staff presented four of the posters. Fairfax County Head Start Nutritionists worked together to promote the Northern Virginia Healthy Kids Coalition's "9-5-2-1-0 Campaign" -- using a catchy slogan to encourage families to make sure that children get 9 hours of sleep,

eat 5 fruits and veggies, limit children to no more than 2 hours of screen time, have 1 hour of physical activity and drink 0 sugary beverages each day.

Tom Collins' poster presented steps used to improve "Male Engagement" at Greater Mount Vernon Community Head Start. "Literacy Leaders" by LaTonya Monroe and Ivory Smith gave tips for involving families in creating opportunities for literacy development through play and during transitions. Guillermo Gomez and Patricia Abbott's poster "Parent Orientation: Gateway to School Readiness" explained how restructuring Parent Orientation into large and small groups builds relationships, enhances communication, and offers increased opportunities for parent engagement.



LaTonya Monroe and Ivory Smith (not pictured) presented "Literacy Leaders."



Guillermo Gomez and Patricia Abbott share ways to involve parents in school readiness efforts.



Tom Collins shares the "Male Engagement" program at GMVCHS.



## OFC at VAECE conference

OFC staff recently participated in the Virginia Association for Early Childhood Education's Conference "Building Bridges – Creating Connections." With more than 1500 attendees, the 2013 VAECE Annual Conference held in Reston was a significant gathering of classroom teachers, leaders, administrators, consultants and researchers from all over Virginia.

Local, state, and national presenters provided a wealth of information, resources, and strategies that conference participants could use in their centers, classrooms, and family child care homes to support the developmental needs of the children they serve. Conference attendees were able to network and share their best practices and ideas with other early childhood educators and enhance their professional growth and development.

When asked about her most memorable part of the conference, SACC Director Anne Goldstein said it was the opportunity to meet with high school students studying early

childhood education. "As a facilitator, I was there to motivate and encourage them to pursue a career working with children; but **their** heartfelt and enthusiastic stories about what they wanted to accomplish were inspiring to me! They are the early childhood and school age professionals of the future, and the future looks bright for children, families, and the child care profession!"

OFC staff were speakers and presenters on a wide variety of topics:

**Marshann Snyder** – Introduction to the Child Development Associates Credential

**Denise Reid** – Art of Storytelling

**Carol Osborn** – Supporting Successful Transitions to Kindergarten

**Helen Webster and Julie Renne**  
Exploring the Wonder of Nature, and What Every Child Needs

**Anne-Marie Twohie** – Regional Panel on Creative Ways to Support Teachers

and Children, and OFC's Child Care Workforce Survey

**Anne Goldstein** – Early Childhood Education Student meeting

**Bronwyn Dean** – Super Hero Play: Ban It or Join It?

**Maria Gallagher** – Building Resilience through Relationships

**Debbie Weigand and Paula Bellville**  
It's all About the Fit

**Anita McElhiney** – Effective Communication with School Age Children

**Karen Quist** – Positive Guidance: Preschool Strategies

**Kathy Uhrich and Rodney Mills**  
– Good Old-Fashioned Play for School Age Children

**Nancy Brannegan** – Sensory Experiences for Young Children

**Kevin Mathews** – Successful Inclusion Practices

## Correction to the Length of Service Awards

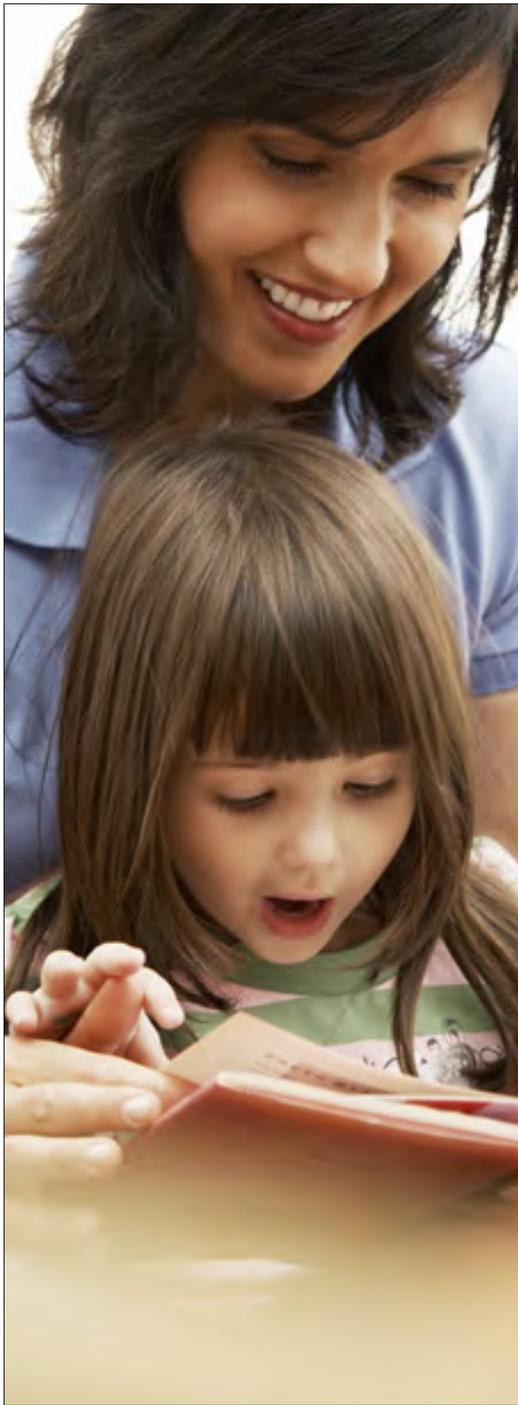
The following OFC employees were recently recognized for reaching 25 years of employment, rather than 20 years as previously stated in Grapevine.

Melinda Beamer  
Nancy Brannegan  
Marsha Celistan

Arthur Cole  
Nirmal Gupta  
Patricia Castillo Ludwig

Carolyn Ann Staats  
Dian Lawrence Tublin  
Catherine Seaman Vandersluis

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## School Readiness Partners with Libraries for Book Guide

OFC has partnered with Fairfax County Public Library to create “School Readiness: Books for Early Childhood Professionals and Parents.” This booklet is a colorful collection of beloved children’s classics and new lesser-known gems. Short descriptions of each book give readers a feel for their content. The booklet is arranged into a variety of diverse topics, allowing parents and educators to search by areas such as Social and Emotional Development, Language, Science, Mathematics, and Kindergarten Readiness.

Copies of the booklet are available in the children’s sections of Fairfax County Public Libraries, and several libraries have created displays to feature books selected from the list. School Readiness Coordinator Betsi Closter stated, “The booklet has been well received. These guides can help parents and educators introduce children to quality literature at a

young age and foster a love of learning that can last a lifetime.”



Many of these books were purchased by OFC for the Library through a Smart Beginnings Grant from the Virginia Department of Social Services and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation. The books correspond to the county’s “Early Learning Guidelines.” Providing tools like this booklet to the public further The Office for Children’s mission to advance the care, education and healthy development of children from birth through elementary school.

## ECCC Book Fair

County employees browsed at the Employees’ Child Care Center book fair. They could choose from a wide selection of books for children including hardback picture books, sturdy board books for infants and toddlers and Spanish-language books. There were also colorful pencils, pens and erasers and other school supplies sure to appeal to the child in everyone. Proceeds will be used for books, toys and materials for the Employees’ Child Care Center.





## Children Perform in SACC Short Play Festival

Wakefield Forest and Woodburn SACC programs participated in the Fairfax County School Age Child Care and Neighborhood and Community Services Short Play Festival held at the James Lee Community Center Theatre in Falls Church.

28, children from the eight participating SACC centers presented the short play they have worked on for the past few months. Each production lasted approximately 15 minutes, and was critiqued by a panel experienced in theatre and the performing arts.

On Monday, Jan. 28, 2013, children from Camelot, Fairhill, Little Run, Mantua, Shreveview, Stenwood,

Throughout the year, many children enrolled in SACC have had the opportunity to learn about and participate in a variety of aspects of a theatrical production including acting, costume design, set design, lighting and sound design. On Jan.

Opportunities for children to engage in enriching artistic activities such as the Short Play Festival support SACC's curriculum focus for this school year, "Kaleidoscope of the Arts: Creativity From Every Angle."

## Domestic Violence Training Offers Resources to SACC Staff

The SACC program has partnered with the Domestic Violence Unit of the Department of Family Services Child Youth and Family Division to educate SACC staff and heighten their awareness to the damaging effects that witnessing domestic violence can have on children. Being witness to domestic violence plays a significant role in the short and long-term social, emotional, and behavioral development of school-age children.

"The training was extremely informative and educational," said Dogwood SACC Center Supervisor Kurtis Barrows. "The effects of domestic violence stretch far

beyond the household and unfortunately children who witness domestic violence suffer traumas that can last a lifetime," Barrows said.

SACC employees were educated on signs and symptoms of domestic violence in the household for both children and adults, and were provided statistics pertaining to domestic violence in Fairfax County.

"The most important thing to remember is to be supportive," said trainer and DFS Social Worker, Dani Colòn. "As mandated reporters, you must act quickly to report cases of



abuse and domestic violence," she said.

The training concluded with useful resources and strategies to implement if victims of domestic violence come forward about their experiences or if it is suspected that a child has witnessed domestic violence.

### 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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