

## March is National Nutrition Month®

"Enjoy the Taste of Eating Right" is the theme of National Nutrition Month® 2014. According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, consumer research confirms that taste tops nutrition as the main reason why one food is purchased over another. This year's key messages for National Nutrition Month focus on how to combine taste and nutrition to create healthy meals that follow the Dietary Guidelines recommendations.

In the Office for Children, nutritionists are planning several events during the month of March to encourage families and family child care providers to make good nutrition a part of their daily lives. Next month's Grapevine will include more information about activities planned by Head Start and Community Education and Provider Services.



## Head Start Takes Measures for Success - RBA

The Head Start division is the focus of this month's feature on Results Based Accountability. All Fairfax County human services agencies are using RBA as a way to measure how much work is done, and how well, and to determine whether people are "better off" as a result of receiving services. Head Start's outcomes are measured in two of the county's RBA areas: Economic Self Sufficiency, and Successful Children and Youth.

In tracking "How Much" work was done during fiscal year 2013, the Office for Children, Fairfax County Public Schools and Higher Horizons worked in partnership through the Head Start program, to support 2059 infants, toddlers and preschoolers from 1880 families. Head Start family services staff

worked with 100 percent of families to develop a Family Partnership Agreement and identify goals that support family growth and self-sufficiency while ensuring that families and children are ready for school.

In Early Head Start and Head Start, children receive a quality learning experience that prepares them for later success in school. Head Start partners with other government agencies, universities and the private non-profit sector to support children's preparation for school. Additionally, Head Start works with private mental health consultants and health practitioners to volunteer and provide services to Head Start children and their families.

Overall, 97 percent of families rate that services provided to them were good to excellent, indicating a strong measure of "How Well" Head Start did its work. Head Start staff develops strong, supportive relationships with families. They encourage families to be involved as volunteers in the classrooms, participate in monthly parent education meetings and serve on the Head Start Policy Committees and Council.

Further outcomes, or "Better Off" measures, were also met. Eighty-five to 90 percent of children in the program were found to meet or exceed benchmarks in literacy and math. Also, for the second year in a row, the percentage of children completing diagnosed dental treatment has risen.

# Early Head Start Partners with Junior League

In February, Early Head Start Family Child Care partnered with the Junior League of Northern Virginia to present “A Parent’s Guide to Food, Fitness and Fun!” Each month, as part of its mission, EHS Family Child Care hosts parent information meetings featuring topics such as social-emotional health, developing successful sleep routines, and wellness and nutrition.

Families enjoyed a meal together before the program began. Event organizer and OFC Nutritionist Debra O’Farell, noted that this time gave parents a chance to talk with one another, encouraging positive peer relationships and the development of a strong support network.

The Junior League’s presenters gave tips on preparing easy, healthy, tasty and quick meals. They explored fun ways to build exercise into a family’s busy schedule and shared some ways families can have fun together without watching television.

O’Farell said “This was a great event that fits into our mission to provide nutrition education to EHS families. I appreciate the members of the Junior League volunteering their time, and I hope this will become a yearly event.”



## School Age Child Care Classes

This month, the Institute for Early Learning offers five courses for child care providers and teachers of school age children that explore ways to guide behavior, develop interests and enhance abilities. Four of these courses were developed by SACC Regional Supervisors, Kathy Uhrich, Anita McElhiney, Steve Snyder, Denise Reid, and Program Administrator Kevin Mathews.

Two classes explore the ways that school-age educators communicate with children and cultivate a supportive environment. In How to Talk With School Age Children, educators will examine a variety of tools that are useful in both identifying children’s abilities to express feelings and resolve conflict, and guiding them through the problem-solving process. Challenging Behaviors in School Age Children will investigate ways to create positive social moments for children and collaborate with families to develop strategies for success.

In keeping with SACC’s current curriculum, the third offering, Discover the Wonders of Nature with School Age Children, explores the many ways that

school-age children learn about the natural world and helps educators find ways to encourage the naturalist in each child. As the performing arts is another pivotal component of the SACC program, the course Creating Performances with School Age Children will discuss the benefits for school-age children of participating in the performing arts. In addition the course will highlight different types of productions that are fun and easy to create with school age children, even on a tight budget.

For the fifth course IFEL consultant, Erin Jacobs, will offer Moving from Crafts to Expressive Art Experiences. Educators will learn strategies for using everyday materials to create work with personal meaning for school-age children. This hands-on class delves into bookmaking, sculpture, painting and printing with an emphasis on connections to artists using similar techniques.

Offering a variety of school age classes supports community programs in providing enriching experiences and quality care for school age children.

# March is Music In Our Schools Month

In celebration of Music in Our Schools Month, “Grapevine” is showcasing ways music education plays a vital role in many early childhood and school age programs. There are many well documented benefits of music instruction and activities for children such as:

- Improving verbal memory and comprehension.
- Building listening skills.
- Supporting vocabulary development.
- Increasing phonemic awareness.
- Improving auditory processing.

OFC programs encourage early childhood educators to incorporate music into daily interactions with children. The Institute for Early Learning offers workshops on topics such



as music and movement, nursery rhymes, and dramatic play, which introduce songs and activities while exploring what research reveals about the importance of combining movement with music in early learning environments. The Virginia Preschool Initiative coordinates workshops that support educators and families in sharing music and dance, drama and movement, with children each day. Workshops are offered through vendors such as Moving through Math, ABC Music and Me from Kindermusik International, and the Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts. They are filled with hands-on demos and occasionally provide take-home kits for families including musical instruments, CD recordings and music education packets.

Head Start also partners with the Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts by inviting families and teachers to create active, multisensory experiences for children through music-based learning. Assessment results for this successful program reveal that children had quantifiable improvement in six categories: initiative, social relations, creative representation, language and literacy,

logic and mathematics, and music and movement.

Children in SACC have a variety of opportunities throughout the year to express themselves musically, choreograph dances and collaborate to design costumes, including center performances and talent showcases. Several multi-center events are also held including a short play festival and an annual showcase which incorporates SACC’s current curriculum focus. This spring approximately 400 children from 25 SACC centers will perform for family and friends in “Nature’s Wonders: Kids on Stage.”

SACC also offers music-based workshops for SACC teachers. In Beats to Brush, teachers listen to and interpret music through watercolor painting, then explore ways to encourage children to paint a story representing the sounds of various rhythms. SACC teachers have found incorporating music with art to be especially beneficial as a means of expression for children with autism.

This month, join OFC programs in embracing experiences in music and celebrating the vital role music plays in the lives of children of all ages.



# Woodley Hills SACC Examines the Weather



In keeping with the SACC Curriculum, Digging Deeper into the Wonders of Nature, children at Woodley Hills SACC have been learning about the four seasons. For three months, they have enjoyed logging the daily temperature and recording weather changes, as well as learning about how changes in the atmosphere affect plant and animal life, air quality and more.

The children had the opportunity to take part in a variety of fun weather-related activities. They created cloud

finders to help them learn the names of the different types of clouds and used the finders to identify clouds in the sky. They also explored weather phenomena such as hurricanes and tornadoes and how converging air currents create the swirling vortexes in each storm. As a visual representation of this, they made a hurricane in a bottle.

The children practiced using new weather terminology as they predicted the weather and presented the forecast to their peers. Some children enjoyed using a puppet to present the forecast.

A highlight of the children's experience was a recent visit from Amelia Segal, a

meteorologist with NBC News Storm Team 4. Segal talked with children about how science and technology are used to forecast the weather and predict certain weather related outcomes. Segal kept



the children engaged by playing games that reinforced weather terminology. The children especially liked playing a game that reinforced "high pressure, low pressure" concepts and effects.



## 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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