



OFC Celebrates National Nutrition Month

The theme for National Nutrition Month 2014, “Enjoy the Taste of Eating Right,” aims to support individuals in combining good nutrition with taste to create healthy, appetizing meals. In keeping with the theme, the Office for Children’s Community Education and Provider Services held two nutrition fairs for family child care providers in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Participants tried out activities and recipes from “Eat and Run,” a book developed by CEPS to help providers bring good nutrition and physical activity into their daily programs with children. Each participant was given a copy to use in their child care program.

During National Nutrition Month Head Start and Early Head Start programs partnered with The Reston Chapter of The Links to hold two events for Head Start families focusing on the health and nutrition of children. The main speaker was pediatrician, and member of The Links,

Dr. Regina Milteer-Rock. She spoke with families about the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables, the value of a good night’s sleep, how to stay active and incorporate indoor physical activity. Dr. Milteer-Rock also suggested questions parents could ask pediatricians to better understand their child’s individual health and nutritional needs.

Families from Higher Horizons, Greater Mount Vernon and Family Child Care enjoyed the events. They especially appreciated receiving a full bag of fresh fruits and vegetables courtesy of The Reston Chapter of The Links.



From the Reston Chapter of The Links, Angela Butler, president; Marilyn Lightfoote, Health and Human Services Facet chair, Joan Coleman HHS Facet member, Regina Milteer-Rock, speaker and member, Anita LaRue-McAfee, Facet co-chair



SACC Centers Participate in Great Backyard Bird Count

The National Audubon Society's 17th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count took place from February 14 -17. Each year during the GBBC, bird watchers from more than 100 countries observe and count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count and enter their sightings at www.BirdCount.org. The information gathered by volunteers helps track bird populations worldwide.

A natural fit with the focus of the School Age Child Care program's curriculum, Digging Deeper into the Wonders of Nature, 36 SACC centers participated in this year's bird count. "Many of the SACC teachers participated in a training

conducted by our partners at the Audubon Society. It helped them to really understand the mission of the GBBC and inspired them to get children excited about this project," said SACC program administrator Beth Leggat. SACC teachers and children worked together to create environments that attract birds by adding birdfeeders and other elements to their center's outdoor spaces.

Children and their families were encouraged to participate in the count over the weekend. Children enjoyed going outside and being able to observe and identify a variety of birds including

hawks, robins, sparrows, starlings, gulls, cardinals and vultures. "I liked when we saw the big hawk flying over us," said Evan, a first grader. Chris Barker center supervisor at Poplar Tree SACC said, "It was awesome to see the excitement on children's faces! We enjoyed learning together about the types of birds that stay in this area during the cold months."

"The Great Backyard Bird Count was a great way for children to connect with nature," said Leggat. "We look forward to expanding our partnership with the Audubon Society next year."



HS Policy Council Sworn in

Newly elected Head Start Policy Council officers were recently sworn in by Mauricio Barraza, former Policy Council chairperson, and current Head Start representative to the Community Action Advisory Board.

Policy Council members include parents of Head Start children and local community agency representatives. They share governance responsibilities with the Board of Supervisors in the

planning, operation and evaluation of Fairfax County Head Start programs.

"Head Start could not exist without the willingness of these individuals to serve on the policy council," said Head Start Director Jennifer Branch. "It shows a real commitment to their personal growth and engagement in their children's lives."



Mauricio Barraza, HS representative to the Community Advisory Board; Sheena Jones, treasurer; Abdeltif Bensouda, parliamentarian; Rubi Colchao, chair; Mira Martinez, vice chair; not pictured Daniel Gebissa, secretary.



OFC Welcomes Korean Delegation

February 25, the Office for Children hosted a 20-member delegation from the Republic of Korea. This group visited OFC to learn about our work with children and families. The delegation was welcomed by OFC staff, heard a presentation on programs and services, and toured the Employees' Child Care Center. Visiting officials enjoyed interacting with children and talking with center staff. "This was a great opportunity for us to learn from and share with colleagues from another country. We truly enjoyed having them," said Anne-Marie Twhie, OFC Director.



CCAR Measures Success – RBA

This month's feature on Results Based Accountability focuses on the Child Care Assistance and Referral program. Each Fairfax County human services agency is using RBA to measure how much and how well work has been done, and to determine how people are "better off" as a result of receiving services. CCAR's outcomes are measured in two of the county's RBA areas: Economic Self Sufficiency, and Successful Children and Youth.

CCAR assists families eligible for a child care subsidy to find and pay for care. The county's child care subsidy program served 6,271 children locally and 3,693 children with state funds. Due to the transition to VaCMS (the state system) this fiscal year, many children were served a portion of the year in each system. As part of this service in FY 2013, CCAR staff worked with 1,148 local vendors each month including family child care providers and centers. CCAR also assists families who contact the program to inquire about finding child care for their children. There was an average of 2700 website "visits" per month in FY 2013 for child care searches.

As a measure of "how well" work was performed, 97 percent of parents indicated that they were satisfied with services they received.

To determine how people are "better off" as a result of their participation in the subsidized child care program, CCAR measured the percentage of sliding fee families that maintained or increased their income between the time of their initial eligibility and their annual program recertification. It is encouraging that during an economically difficult time, 63 percent of sliding fee families reported an increased or stable income.

In summary, CCAR subsidies make it possible for parents to stay employed, complete their educational goals, and work to attain and/or maintain their economic self-sufficiency while their children are in safe and reliable care. CCAR provides information about quality care and helps families find care that supports their children's school readiness and success.



SACC Kids Shine a Spotlight on Nature

Each year the School Age Child Care program brings children, families and teachers from multiple SACC centers together to showcase the performing arts. A team of center staff and SACC administration has coordinated this event for five years.

Approximately 400 children from 24 SACC centers performed in this year's musical showcase "Nature's Wonders: Kids on Stage." In keeping with this year's SACC curriculum, "Digging Deeper into the Wonders of Nature," each song and performance focused on exploring and connecting with the natural world.

Children experienced various aspects of the performing arts, visual arts and language arts while preparing for these performances. They worked with the SACC teachers to rehearse their song, choreograph a dance, design costumes, and practice routines. Children enjoyed performing a variety of songs including old-time favorite, "Rockin' Robin" and current hit, "What Does the Fox Say?" One favorite was the children from Fort Hunt SACC's performance of "Sounds of Nature," an original song, written and composed by SACC teacher Chris Holmes and featuring instrumental accompaniment by SACC parents.

As in past years, the showcases collected items for contribution to local charitable organizations. A variety of snack foods were collected to benefit the children and families served by FACETS, and canned and boxed food items were collected to benefit individuals in the community through United Community Ministries. "The children do an amazing job preparing for and performing in the showcase. They really enjoy seeing all the donations collected and knowing they are helping to make a difference in their community," said SACC Regional Supervisor Patricia Cantu.



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.



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