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## In Touch With Technology

March 13 and 14, the Office for Children and Fairfax Futures hosted events focused on appropriate ways to integrate technology into quality early childhood education programs.

The keynote speaker on both days was Lisa Guernsey, director of the Early Education Initiative and the Learning Technologies Project, New America, and the author of "Screen Time: How Electronic Media – From Baby Videos to Educational Software – Affects Your Young Child." Guernsey encouraged educators to work in partnership with families and use the three Cs – Content- what they see, Context- how the technology is used, and the (individual) Child's development – when choosing and using digital media with young children. Guernsey's main message was that research shows active adult-child engagement and interactive use of technology with young children can support learning.

On Friday, March 13, there were approximately 150 participants including, mentors and administrators from programs participating in Virginia Quality Rating and Improvement System (VQRIS), OFC staff, and regional leaders in early childhood education. Participants had an opportunity to explore a variety of applications and devices that are being used in early care and education programs. Organizations

such as Fairfax County Public Library, Fairfax County Public Schools, SMART and the Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning through the Arts displayed an array of technology resources. This was followed by a panel discussion featuring Lisa Guernsey, Claire Lerner of Zero to Three, and Celeste Rodrigo of FCPS.

Funding for the March 13 event was made possible through the VQRIS grant.

On March 14, more than 300 early childhood educators attended the 11th Annual School Readiness Symposium, "In Touch with Technology: Connecting Children, Teachers and Families in the Digital Age." The event opened with welcoming remarks by Fairfax County Board Chairman Sharon Bulova; Fairfax County School Board Chairman Tamara Derenak Kaufax, PNC Financial Services Assistant Vice President Steve Day; and Fairfax County Public Schools, Chief Academic Officer Kim Dockery. In addition to the keynote speaker, the symposium featured workshops presented by WETA-TV, the Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning through the Arts, OFC and FCPS.

The symposium was hosted by Fairfax Futures, OFC, and FCPS, and made possible by a grant from the PNC Foundation.

# Mission of Mercy for Head Start Families



OFC's Head Start program recently participated in the 12th Mission of Mercy (MOM) Project. The MOM Project is a partnership between Northern Virginia Dental Society and Northern Virginia Community College, which took place at the NVCC's Medical Education Campus on March 13 - 14, 2015. This event provided much needed dental care at no cost to uninsured, and under-insured income eligible adults from Northern Virginia jurisdictions.

Head Start Health Specialist Amy Joyner, who is a registered nurse, coordinated Head Start's participation, reaching out to family service workers in all programs including Higher Horizons, OFC and Fairfax County

Public Schools. Joyner worked with family service workers to recruit adult family members in need of dental services. FSWs also helped family members to complete required paperwork and make sure that they were prescreened to qualify for care before the event.

On the day of the event, Joyner conducted health screenings for parents as they signed in for their appointment. Head Start Nutritionist Everludis Lopez and Quality Assurance Manager Karle Finley assisted with registration. Lopez also provided translation services.

The MOM Project brought together general dentists, specialists,

hygienists, dental assistants and community volunteers, including first and second year Medical Education Campus dental hygiene students, to provide treatment to 877 patients. A wide range of oral health services were offered including cleanings, extractions, fillings, and prophylaxis. The total value of care based on procedures performed was estimated at \$546,368.

"This was a privilege and such a rewarding experience" said Joyner. "The participants were all so grateful and excited to receive free dental care. Mission of Mercy truly gives smiles back to its participants."

## Head Start Policy Council Sworn in

Head Start Policy Council officers were sworn in at their March meeting by Fairfax County Hunter Mill District Supervisor Cathy Hudgins. The officers pledged to support the mission and goals of the Head Start program and serve as representatives of the Policy Council. Hudgins thanked them for their service.

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 Director Jennifer Branch said "The commitment of these individuals to serve on the policy council is essential to the work of Head Start. We applaud their engagement in their children's lives."



From left to right, back row: Supervisor Cathy Hudgins, Chairperson Alicia Doe, Vice Chairperson, Yasmine Benavides, Parliamentarian Daniel Gebissa, Treasurer Sheena Jones, Secretary Luluseged Temtem, Community Representative Elizabeth Austin. Front row: council members Ariel Perez, Rajaa Oukchir, Hisham Hassan and Sidra Khan.

# CEPS Hosts Nutrition Month Event



Community Education and Provider Services celebrated National Nutrition Month with an event for child care providers who participate in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program. To highlight this year's theme of "Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle," the providers worked together in small groups on activities that they could do with children in their programs. Then the groups came back together and demonstrated activities such as relay races, Jump the Creek and Magical Animal Sack. Providers also were able to sample nutritious recipes like quinoa salad. These delicious recipes gave providers some ideas for new ways to introduce healthy new foods to the children in their care.



Providers also enjoyed trying some yoga poses that they can do with children to promote overall health. The yoga exercise was led by Amy O'Leary, an intern from George Mason University pursuing her master's degree in Food and Nutrition Studies. These activities were all designed to encourage providers to adopt a healthy lifestyle for themselves and the children in their care.

## OFC Outreach at FCPS Conference

Office for Children staff has been reaching out to the community through a number of events. Through these events OFC staff raises community awareness of programs such as Head Start, SACC, and CCAR. In addition staff shared information about the child care database on the OFC website, emphasizing the importance of using permitted or licensed family child care providers.

Recently, OFC staff participated in the Fairfax County Special Education Conference. They had an opportunity to meet families, and share various OFC materials such as "Stepping into Kindergarten" a guide to helping children become school ready.

This widely attended event attracts families of children of all ages, many of whom are in need of special

education services. The conference featured a keynote address about executive functioning skills and learning by Dr. Bruce Wexler author of "Brain and Culture: Neurobiology, Ideology and Social Change." There were also numerous workshops throughout the day on a variety of subjects related to education.

Through this event families received many resources to promote student success. Representatives from nearly 80 community and county organizations including the Office for Children's Child Care Assistance and Referral and SACC divisions were on hand to share information about services that could be of help to families.



# Amazing Talents, Celebrating the WOW in Every Child!



Over two weekends in March, 450 children, their families and teachers from SACC centers across Fairfax County came together to take part in a showcase of the performing arts. This highly anticipated annual event provides the opportunity for children to experience various aspects of the performing arts, visual arts and language arts while preparing for the showcases.

The theme for this year's showcase, Kids on Stage: Amazing Talents, Celebrating the WOW in Every Child!, is also the SACC program's curriculum focus of the school year. SACC teachers coordinated the event and worked with the children to rehearse songs, choreograph dances, design costumes, and practice routines.

Songs and performances showcased each child's unique and special talents. Several performances featured original songs written by SACC teachers and children. The message of Laurel Hill SACC's performance focused on believing in oneself and never giving up. Lyrics such as "only I can be me" highlighted the Wow in Every Child curriculum. Children from

Bucknell SACC performed an original routine about SACC – "where kids go to learn and have fun!" Bull Run SACC's performance of "S.A.C.C." to the tune of "Y.M.C.A." had everyone clapping along! The children also performed a variety of classic and current popular hits, as well as international dances like "Masala Bhangra." Performances were proudly introduced by a child from each of the SACC centers accompanied by SACC's masters of ceremonies, Chris Holmes and Mike Trammell.



Community service is also an important part of each year's performance showcase. This year the 32 participating SACC centers collected canned and boxed food to benefit children and families served by FACETS and United Community Ministries. "The children really enjoy seeing the donations combined together at the showcase and knowing they are helping to make a difference in their community," said 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](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc).



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