



Head Start Celebrates 50th Anniversary

On May 18, 1965, in the White House Rose Garden, President Lyndon B. Johnson announced to the nation the creation of Project Head Start. In anticipation of the 50th anniversary of this occasion, the National Head Start Association asked programs across the nation to demonstrate their renewed commitment to at-risk children on May 18, 2015 by planting a rose bush.

Fairfax County Early Head Start Family Child Care and Higher Horizons Head Start/Early Head Start took part in the national celebration.

Fifteen Early Head Start family child care providers participated in this event. The providers involved the children in the planting. They helped dig holes, transplant the

bushes, fill in potting soil, and water the plants. It was a fun and educational experience for everyone involved.

Higher Horizons planted rosebushes at the entrance to the center. Director Mary Ann Cornish stated in her welcome address for the planting, "We hereby dedicate these rosebushes to the Early Head Start children of today and those yet to come."

"It is wonderful that each location will have a tangible reminder of the founding of the Head Start program 50 years ago and their commitment to carry on the work investing in the lives of children in Head Start," said Fairfax County Office for Children Head Start Director Jennifer Branch.



OFC Welcomes New CCAR Director

Flor Philips has been named the new director of the Child Care Assistance and Referral program which includes the child care subsidy program, and resource and referral for parents seeking child care.

Philips has a great deal of experience in the field of early childhood education. Her first job was as a classroom assistant at the Springfield Academy when she was 15 years old. Philips continued working at the center while pursuing an education and rose to the position of assistant director. Meanwhile, she graduated George Mason University with a degree in psychology, and followed this with coursework at Northern Virginia Community College in the field of early childhood education. After ten years working with children and families in the center, Philips took a position with Child Care Aware doing resource and referral work.

Philips was with Child Care Aware for 12 years managing a national consumer education and referral hotline and website for the Office of Child Care. While at Child Care Aware, Philips was promoted several times, moving up from front line staff handling consumer education to become the Deputy Chief of National Programs.

During her time with Child Care Aware, Philips' department helped families from all over the country to connect to agencies like the Office for Children for help finding quality child care. Philips also oversaw several contracts from the Department of Defense branches in which her staff was responsible for managing a large child care subsidy program specifically for eligible military families.

Philips is quick to speak about her lifelong love for this work, explaining that her background as an immigrant



and a parent lend her a great deal of compassion, appreciation and respect for the families CCAR serves. Philips said, "I am looking forward to learning more about the community where I grew up. I am looking for better ways to serve the families and more efficient ways we can operate in our division. I especially want to hear the staff perspectives on the work that we are doing."



The Office for Children recently welcomed Sallee Beneke, PhD, published author and nationally recognized early childhood expert to conduct a workshop on The Project Approach. Beneke is currently an assistant professor of Early Childhood Education at St. Ambrose University in Illinois. Considered an expert on the Project Approach, Beneke has used it in a variety of positions ranging from kindergarten and prekindergarten teacher for at-risk students, to college instructor, early childhood special

The Project Approach

education teacher, and child care center director.

The Project Approach is a method of engaging children in learning by focusing on in-depth, interactive studies of real-world topics, based on children's interests. Projects include learning by doing, group discussions and the revisiting of ideas and experiences.

Participants in this interactive workshop learned more about this process of learning, which incorporates three major steps: establish the study (determine what you know about the topic); exploratory learning (hands-on activities and discovery); and personalize knowledge (create original art, stories, drama, etc. to demonstrate knowledge gained

through the process. When using the Project Approach, educators can invite families and children to participate in a closing event featuring a display of work accomplished through the process.

"I am glad we were able to bring Sallee to Fairfax County to share these strategies with educators. The Project Approach guides children to the answers to questions that they want to know about and develops their natural curiosity. It can be used with any curriculum, and it is a great way to bring STEM exploration into early childhood programs." said Virginia Preschool Initiative Director Rhonda Houck.

For more information about The Project Approach, visit Beneke's blog at <http://illinoispip.org>.



Throughout the spring, Neighborhood School Readiness Teams around Fairfax County supported a variety of kindergarten orientation events by providing school readiness experiences, and information about county services and community resources that support families with rising kindergarteners. Neighborhood Teams provide scaffolding and support to early childhood professionals and families as they prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond. The School Readiness Teams range from

Teams Support School Orientations

15 to 30 members, including school officials, early childhood educators, and representatives from the county and other community organizations.

This spring, nearly 60 family child care providers attended an orientation at Timber Lane Elementary School. School Readiness Coordinator Betsi Closter explained that, “Many family child care providers have never been to the schools the children in their care eventually attend. These programs give them the chance to visit a school, learn about a typical kindergarten day and discover experiences they can provide to children who will be launching into kindergarten.”

In addition, providers learned about the Head Start program, school

lunch program, met with a kindergarten teacher in her classroom, explored easy-to-do hands-on science and math activities, and visited the SACC room. In the school library, county librarians shared tips on how to foster early literacy skills, assisted participants in applying for a library card, and discussed library programs for young children.

Closter said, “We know that the more familiar early childhood professionals are with the school environment, the better prepared they are to support children’s successful transition to kindergarten. Hosting events like this creates a dialogue between the school and county staff and those who work directly with children and their families.”

SACC Ships Ahoy!

What a great event! SACC children and teachers worked together to create boats representing innovations of the ‘80s for the 26th Annual Springfield Days Cardboard Boat Regatta at Lake Accotink. Children from 28 centers paddled enthusiastically toward the finish line while parents, teachers and friends cheered them on!

Waples Mill SACC’s boat, Big Wheelers won the SACC races, and a record number 12 SACC boats stayed afloat until the very end. SACC entries earned several other awards in a variety of categories celebrating their creativity. Laurel Hill SACC received the Most Likely to Float award for their boat, Ghostbusters 2. Churchill Road SACC representing their boat, Red Striker, was awarded Best Costume. Island Creek SACC was awarded Pride of the Regatta for their vessel, Frizzles Crocs.

This is the 14th year that SACC teachers and children have taken the plunge for this thrilling event. Head Teacher Kali Pellegrino, who coordinates SACC’s participation in the regatta, said “ I am always amazed by the creativity of the children and staff of the SACC centers participating in the regatta. So many memorable experiences are created each year as the children experience the pride of working together as a team to build and race their boat.”



Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chair Sharon Bulova, and State Delegate Vivian Watts served as judges, while Congressman Gerry Connelly assisted in the presentation of awards. Island Creek SACC pictured.

Photos by Julie Martin

SACC Professional Development

The School Age Child Care program provides a variety of opportunities for staff to invest in professional development throughout the year. In addition to offering trainings in the categories of Child and Youth Development, Curriculum, Families and Communities, Health, Safety and Accountability, SACC also offers staff the opportunity to participate in several different Cohort Groups including the SACC Supervisor Series, the Individual Child Series, and the SACC Credential.

Each school year, Regional Supervisors LaSondra Moore and Tanya Pullman create a series of trainings designed to support supervisory staff. These Supervisor Cohort Groups consist of new and veteran supervisors who meet throughout the school year for training and discussions on topics from leadership and curriculum development to problem solving and community engagement.

Over the past couple of years, SACC Regional Supervisors have developed and offered a cohort for SACC center staff to increase their knowledge and skills in working with children with special needs. This year's cohort of 32 participants was led by regional supervisors, Susan Allen and Hemlata Bargoti. The "Individual Child Series" covers specific topics related to the children served by the program, such as understanding autism and understanding Down Syndrome, as well as courses in communication strategy development and providing an adaptive curriculum. Through a partnership with the Fairfax County Public Schools Parent Resource Center and other experts in child development, participants of the Individual Child Series are also able to develop new ideas and approaches to inclusion by learning about its benefits for all children.

The SACC Credential was established in 2008 as a comprehensive system to

promote quality services for children and families and support the professional growth and expertise of SACC staff. The credential is constructed around six competency areas, Health and Safety, Curriculum, Professional Development, Child and Youth Development, Families and Communities, and Program Administration. In order to complete the credential, candidates must complete 138 credit hours of training in those six areas.

"SACC staff is truly dedicated to building positive relationships with children and families, implementing strategies that promote children's healthy development, and creating an environment that fosters success for all children. Their commitment to professional development exemplifies their dedication to making a difference for the children and families we serve," said SACC Director Anne Goldstein.

Congratulations to Deborah Nasco (Forest Edge SACC), Michael Trammell (Union Mill SACC), Marian Cannata (Virginia Run SACC), Michael Derrick (Ravensworth SACC), Jennifer Honeycutt (Laurel Hill SACC), and Joanna Frederick (Willow Springs SACC) (not pictured) for completing the SACC Credential.

Participants in SACC's Individual Child Series.



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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