

## Families Enjoy Activities at the Annual KidsFest

OFC booth at Fall for Fairfax goes global with SACC curriculum

As children and their families approached the OFC tent at Fall for Fairfax, staff warmly invited them inside the cozy space. Children were unable to resist the opportunity to go on a Global Adventure.

Once inside the tent, children began making their own passports. They wrote their names and drew a picture of themselves inside. The children took the passports from one cultural activity to the next, proudly selecting a stamp for their passports as they completed each activity.

### Families Complete Global Adventurer Activities

"The planning team borrowed the theme for the OFC booth from the School Age Child Care curriculum, Global Adventurers: Making Connections Around the World," explained curriculum Program Administrator Beth Leggat.

Families worked together to complete these fun, educational experiences based on the theme.

#### ■ The World Map

Children and adults marked the places they and their families are from, and even someplace they would like to visit one day on a large world map. This popular attraction represented the broad cultural diversity in Fairfax County. This led to many meaningful discussions among families about the value of heritage and culture.

#### ■ Global Animals Scratch Art

Children used their creativity to decorate animal prints representing different regions of the world.



#### ■ Global Rhythm Shaker Tubes

Children used a variety of stencils on colored paper to decorate cardboard shaker tubes.

As children finished their adventure, they happily stamped their passports with the words "You are Awesome." Meanwhile, parents took away materials with information about the Office for Children and early literacy resources available through First Books.

"It was a lot of fun seeing how much the children really enjoyed these activities," said OFC staff Shauna Skerman. "I can't wait until we begin planning for next year."



# Making Connections Around the World

## SACC donations help displaced families

School Age Child Care Center Supervisors Beverley Moore and Garry Moore hail from the tiny tropical island of Dominica. The island suffered substantial damage when tropical storm Erika hit in August of this year.

The SACC supervisors wanted to make something positive of the situation. So, they planned a service project to help the people of Dominica and engage SACC children with another culture. More than 40 SACC centers joined in on this global community service project. Children collected and sent backpacks, school supplies, canned foods and basic personal supplies to the relief

organization Rebuild Dominica to distribute to families affected by the storm.

This is just one way SACC teachers are applying the curriculum—Global Adventurers: Making Connections Around the World. As part of SACC’s curriculum, five SACC designed characters accompany children on their virtual travels to exciting locations around the globe. The character Maddox, SACC’s culture champion, is used to introduce children



Bren Mar Park SACC children and staff, along with over 40 other SACC centers, collected goods for families in Dominica.

to various cultural traditions, and encourage children to participate in community service locally and globally.

SACC children are excited to help the people of Dominica and look forward to future opportunities to help others around the globe.



Erin Ramsey (back row, fifth from the left) with staff from Community Education and Provider Services.

## Erin Ramsey Presents Essential Life Skills

### OFC staff to take “Mind in the Making” into the community

In her research-based book, “Mind in the Making,” Ellen Galinsky identifies seven essential life skills that help us develop executive function skills – the ability to focus, self-regulate and retain information, among them.

The process of developing these skills begins early in life, requires practice and the support of others. Young children who are given the opportunity to practice these skills with caring adults are likely to be successful in school and beyond. For instance:

- **Focus and Self Control** enable us to pay attention and stay on task despite distractions.

- **Perspective Taking** helps us be successful in understanding what others expect of us.

- **Making Connections** is understanding how topics relate. The ability to sort, see patterns, and understand symbolism are foundational skills for literacy and math.

### Families and Work Institute provides support to OFC staff

The Office for Children is beginning a new approach for sharing this information by working with early childhood educators and families. In preparation for this effort, Erin Ramsey of the Family and Work Institute presented staff with an interactive overview of executive function and the seven essential life

skills. Staff then worked to develop action plans on how to bring this concept to the community.

Ramsey will be available throughout the winter and spring to support staff as they implement these plans. She will return in May to review the work and provide additional guidance.

School Readiness Coordinator, Betsi Closter explained, “Our goal is for children to have the social and emotional competence to be successful in school and beyond. OFC staff will play an important role as they partner with families and early childhood educators to support the development and promote the awareness of executive function skills in young children.”

# OFC Programs Celebrate Fall!

## The Employee's Child Care Center Welcomes Families

Children and their families entered the playground at the Employees' Child Care Center's Fall Festival to find bales of hay, pumpkins and other seasonal decorations set up for them to explore.

Staff encouraged children to engage in self-directed play. There was a wide variety of activities for the children to explore using all of their senses. Children studied the textures and colors of a variety of fall gourds, and painted small gourds shaped like pumpkins.

The children clambered all over the hay bales, and loved "riding" in the small hay wagon. On another part of the playground, children enjoyed the corn toss game.

No celebration would be complete without food. Children tasted fresh fall flavors including apples and cider. Sharing these activities with their families made this special day even more memorable.

## Head Start Hosts Fun, Educational Fall Festival

On October 23, 2015, Greater Mt. Vernon Community Head Start held their annual Fall Festival right in their own backyard.

GMVCHS hosted a fun filled event that showcased staff's creativity in planning activities that all members of the family could enjoy. Some of the highlights of the day included the obstacle course, parachute play, train ride and who can forget the delicious treats of apple cider and popcorn. Community helpers from the local fire station were also present to give the children a tour of a fire engine and ambulance.

With the beautiful autumn day and the great turnout of families that attended, organizers could not have asked for anything more. Before the event started several of the children's fathers assisted in arranging the games and helped with setting up the petting zoo and bounce house.

Families and staff alike look forward to the fall festival every year. Planning has already begun for next year's event, and if it is anything like this one it is bound to be a great success.



# Office for Children Partners with Health Department

## Family child care providers attend interactive workshop, learn tools for “Keeping Children Healthy”

When some of us think back to our childhood visits to the dentist, we can recall the experience of dissolving a small tablet on our tongues that turned our teeth bright red or blue. This colorful dye showed us if we had missed any plaque while brushing.

Health Department instructors use a similar technique to show family child care providers the importance of proper hand washing in the workshop, “Keeping Children Healthy.”

### Topics Covered in Keeping Children Healthy:

- **Daily Health Assessment**  
Strategies family child care providers can use to determine if a child has symptoms of an illness that may prevent them from being in care that day
- **Community Immunity**  
Contain the spread of diseases through widespread vaccinations
- **Prevention Strategies**  
Healthy diapering, sleeping, and hand washing practices

### Health Department and OFC work to reduce the spread of illness in family child care programs

“Keeping Children Healthy,” is the brainchild of Community Education and Provider Services Director Jene Moore and Health Department Community Outreach Director Patricia Garcia. Moore and Garcia, worked with several staff in the Health Department to develop the training, including presenters Zubair Saeed and Tehani Mundy. The training introduces several important strategies for reducing illness, such as vaccinations and performing daily health assessments of children in child care.

So far after two sessions, 102 providers have attended a workshop. This fall, additional workshops are being offered to speakers of Hindi/Urdu and Spanish.

“We are very pleased with the response to these workshops,” said Moore. Feedback from providers confirms that the information is engaging and valuable in keeping children, other providers and themselves healthy.

Saeed explains that the hand washing demo is a pivotal moment in the class. First the family child care providers apply “Glitterbug potion” on their hands. This fluorescent lotion can only be seen under the UVA lamp inside the purple Glitterbug device.



“Most people are surprised to see that they could do a better job of washing their hands,” workshop instructor Dr. Zubair Saeed said. The Glitterbug hands-on activity is making it fun and memorable to learn about hand washing.

Then providers wash their hands and slide them into the Glitterbug. The more lotion they miss, the more their hands glow. This allows providers to visualize where germs could be missed during hand washing. This activity clearly illustrates the importance of proper hand washing and encourages providers to improve this skill for themselves and for the children in their care.

### Planning for the Future

Reducing the spread of illness is a common goal of both OFC and the Health Department. Following the success of this effort to engage the community in prevention, the partnership will continue in 2016.

“If nothing else, we want providers to remember that hand washing is the single most important means for preventing the spread of infections,” said Garcia. “Glitterbug illustrates that memorably.”

**O F C** Office for Children



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