

OFC Staff Completes Leadership Academy

Developing Leaders in Every Role



OFC staff Dana Haynes, Marissa Younts, Rachel Copeland, Jody Withrow, Shauna Skerman, and Latasha McClain (not pictured) on the day of their graduation from the Leadership Academy's fall cohort.

Until recently, Marissa Younts and Dana Haynes did not realize just how much they have in common. They both began their careers in the Department of Family Services working for School Age Child Care. They each moved to positions working in other OFC programs. Now they are each other's counterparts in Child Care Assistance and Referral and Community Education and Provider Services, respectively.

Participating in the Department of Family Services Leadership Academy allowed Younts and Haynes to get to know each other much better. They worked together on the team, the Percolators, to develop a presentation exploring the role of interns in DFS.

This experience helped Younts and Haynes become good friends and enhanced their work relationship. Haynes said, "We now contact each other daily to provide support while working with clients."

DFS-LA Aims to Build a Model Agency

Building employee connections across program and division lines is just one of the goals of the Leadership Academy. The ultimate aim is to build DFS's internal capacity for leadership so that it is closer to the strategic vision of being a "model social service agency."

Employees at all levels of Family Services are encouraged to participate in this program to learn more about the organization as a whole and to determine how to be a "hero in every role."

Workshops, Group Projects, and Coaching Shape DFS-LA Experience

Leadership Academy participants meet alternating weeks for a total of six sessions with guest speakers. They learn about a variety of topics pertaining to DFS culture and leadership philosophy.

"Each session was full of incredible learning experiences from great speakers. I was able to take away many things from each opportunity and reflect on how I can implement them where I am now," said DFS-LA graduate Rachel Copeland.

When pressed to identify their favorite part of DFS-LA, several staff mentioned the individualized career coaching which helped them identify goals and options for the future. Copeland said this coaching was "a great connector between the actual DFS-LA sessions and putting into practice what I have learned."

This cohort of the Leadership Academy culminated with group projects exploring the role of interns in DFS. Participants had the opportunity to work in teams with staff from across the agency to make final presentations and recommendations to the DFS Senior Management Team.

"Leadership Academy has been so valuable to building relationships outside of CCAR, which has helped me to better serve children and families," said Younts. "It has also reminded me that we can all be leaders and make a difference no matter what our job title is."

National Nutrition Month® Programs for Staff and Community

Each March, during National Nutrition Month, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics encourages a return to the basics of healthful eating. This year's theme, Savor the Flavor of Eating Right®, encourages everyone to slow down and take time to enjoy food traditions while appreciating the pleasures, great flavors and social experiences food can bring to our lives.

In the Office for Children, staff from the Community Education and Provider Services program is 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.

CEPS Nutrition Program Coordinator Abeba Tzeggai explains, "National

Nutrition Month is one way to encourage OFC staff and family child care providers to commit to healthful lifestyle behaviors. We encourage them to integrate good eating practices and regular physical activity into their child care programs and their lives."

The theme, Savor the Flavor of Eating Right®, encourages everyone to experiment with new combinations of herbs and spices while trimming fat and sodium from recipes. OFC's nutritionists have planned programs that will provide new ideas for nutritious and delicious foods for children in care.

Look for photos in next month's Grapevine!



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SACC Celebrates World Cultures

SACC's curriculum provides opportunities for children to virtually travel to exciting locations around the globe. Through the eyes of five curriculum characters, Tinker, Maddox, Addae, Astoria and Isla whose interests include science and technology, culture, sports and fitness, storytelling and the arts, SACC staff guide children's exploration and discovery as they become "Global Adventurers, Making Connections Around the World!"



Several SACC centers including Saratoga and Bull Run SACC recently explored China and held a celebration to mark the

beginning of the Chinese New Year. The Lunar New Year is filled with many traditions and is observed in countries throughout Asia. This year marks the beginning of the Year of the Monkey.

The children celebrated by making a Chinese dragon, lanterns and music shakers which they used in a center parade. Children also enjoyed playing Fire Dragon, a game similar to Pin the Tail on the Donkey. Other activities included writing their names with Chinese characters, making paper fortune cookies, a scavenger hunt and tasting homemade Chinese delicacies. "The celebration was a great way for children to experience the culture and traditions of China," shared SACC Regional Supervisor Art Cole.



Fairfax VPI Integrates Arts Education

Wolf Trap Arts Program Supports Active Learning



A group of teachers with the Fairfax County Virginia Preschool Initiative program stood in a circle imitating characters and objects from a story. One teacher led the group to hop like rabbits while making rabbit

ears above their heads. Another teacher pressed her hands together and moved them side to side like a slithering snake. Later a group of teachers made themselves tight and small like rocks, then tall and pointy like trees.

Learning STEM through music, movement and drama

These are snapshots from a recent Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning workshop led by three of their Master Teaching Artists. That day, VPI teachers learned strategies to integrate music, movement and drama into their teaching of literature, math and science in their preschool classrooms. This partnership between Wolf Trap Institute and VPI is designed to make classroom experiences more meaningful and engaging, and improve learning in these areas.

Using the arts to teach literature and STEM related subjects may seem like old news; however, a recent study conducted in Fairfax County Public Schools points to significant gains in math by students in classrooms using



Wolf Trap Institute's arts-integrated early childhood strategies. In fact, students in classrooms with teachers who participated in the Wolf Trap Institute gained the equivalent of more than a month of additional math

learning. Over the course of two years there was a noticeable long term effect.

Artists in residence provide support beyond the workshop

This workshop was attended by VPI programs taking part in a residency with Wolf Trap. The Wolf Trap artist in residence works side by side with VPI teachers in the classroom to support their understanding and implementation of arts integration strategies. This experiential learning can help math, science and literature come alive for children.

VPI Child Care Specialist Marybel Enriquez explained, "These activities tap into children's natural imagination, expression and creativity. Bringing songs, dance, and play-acting into classroom lessons



encourages children to use their whole bodies and all of their senses to learn new concepts. This is especially helpful for children who are English language learners."

After using the strategies for several months, teachers take part in a peer share. This is a chance to discuss their lesson plans with other teachers, learn from each other, and gain new ideas to take back to their classrooms.

VPI Director Rhonda Houck said, "This collaboration with Wolf Trap is a great way to expand educational opportunities in VPI classrooms. These experiences align with the Virginia Foundation Blocks for Early Learning and promote an enriching learning environment in which children can learn the best."

CEPS Programs Enhance Family Child Care

Professional Development Generates Positive Response



Whitney W., a family child care provider, participated in the Office for Children program Supporting Quality in Family Child Care Homes last year. Supporting Quality is a 4–6 month project in which a child care specialist works closely with a family child care provider to enhance specific areas of their program. During the process, Whitney began making positive and meaningful changes to the activities and environment in her program.

Whitney discovered that incorporating these improvements resulted in benefits including:

- Greater engagement from the children.
- Improved ability to supervise effectively.
- Increased enrollment in her program.

Success stories like Whitney's inspire staff in Community Education and Provider Services to continue offering several professional development opportunities like Supporting Quality.

New Courses in Winter and Spring

These courses are designed to help family child care providers enhance their programs to support the education

and wellbeing of children:

- **Engaging Environments in Family Child Care Homes** is offered in partnership with OFC's Institute for Early Learning. Providers explore ways to create environments that are nurturing and promote learning opportunities for young children.
- **Safety and Supervision** helps providers learn about their role in supervising children and providing a safe early learning environment.
- **Keeping Children Healthy** focuses on putting into place systems for preventing the spread of disease within a child care setting.

Courses like these help develop the abilities of family child care providers, which benefits children and families through the physical, emotional and mental development of young children in care.

In the words of recent Supporting Quality participant Ivonne J., "I experienced a big change by knowing about the options and opportunities to grow as a professional and as a person." The children have benefitted because, "I am reinforcing their knowledge and they are more equipped to be successful in school."

Reaching Out to the Community

OFC staff attends a variety of community events to share information about the services we provide for children and families. Rhonda Cuffey of Community Education and Provider Services is seen here at a Babies R Us fair where she distributed information on the importance of choosing a permitted family child care provider. OFC staff has attended other recent outreach events including the Infant & Toddler Connection's Transition Workshop and Resource Fair, the Reston Camp Expo, and the Neighborhood and Community Leaders Conference.



OFC 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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