

Partnering with Families

Symposium Speakers Emphasize Building Connections Across Cultures

Nearly 270 early care and education professionals attended the 12th Annual School Readiness Symposium. "Hand in Hand: Partnering with Families to Support Children's School Readiness" focused on the importance of engaging families as partners in preparing children for success in school and throughout their lives.



Rachel Martin demonstrates technology used in child care settings to encourage parents to engage virtually.

Fairfax Deputy County Executive for Human Services Pat Harrison, Fairfax Futures Executive Director Vera Steiner Blore and PNC Financial Services Group Senior Vice President and Director of Community and Client Relations Sonia McCormick provided opening remarks.

Keynote speaker, Georgetown University Assistant Professor Amy Hunter, recognized

families as children's first educators, and highlighted the importance of working in partnership with families to support children's school readiness. Hunter encouraged educators to try to understand the unique needs, culture, and experience of each family as much as the needs of the children.

Child Development Experts Present Workshops

Hunter's workshop focused on how to recognize and accommodate different temperaments among children, including the easy-going child, the child who is slow to warm, and the active child.

CentroNía Institute Director Esteban Morales focused on dispelling myths about educating dual language learners. Morales emphasized the value of maintaining a home language, explaining that students do better in school and in acquiring a second language if their first language is well-established.

OFC Child Care Specialist Rachel Martin presented ways that educators can use the Internet to build family-educator connections. Martin provided examples of how educators can use social media,



OFC Director Anne-Marie Twohie; Keynote Speaker, Amy Hunter; Fairfax Futures Executive Director Vera Steiner Blore; and Sonia McCormick with PNC Financial Services Group.

interactive eBook apps and technology like Skype to encourage communication with families while children are in care.

University of Connecticut Assistant Professor Dr. Linda Halgunseth

shared strategies for building connections between culturally and linguistically diverse families. Emphasizing that speaking a common language cannot guarantee successful communication, she encouraged educators to look for non-verbal clues such as tone, body language, gestures and facial expressions to build connections with families.

The Symposium was hosted in partnership by Fairfax Futures and the Office for Children and made possible through a generous grant from the PNC Foundation.



Photos left to right:

1. Dr. Linda Halgunseth provides strategies for successful parent-educator communication.
2. Esteban Morales discusses educating dual language learners.
3. Amy Hunter delivers her keynote address.

Head Start Welcomes Intern Partnership Supports Effort to Improve Health of Children and Families

Head Start encourages good nutrition for children and families in the program. Each year Head Start invites interns to work with the program. This year, an intern from Bowling Green State University Dietetic Internship program partnered with the children and families at Greater Mount Vernon Community Early Head Start and Head Start programs to support good nutrition.



Shvets leads Head Start parents on a supermarket tour to learn how to buy healthy foods on a budget.

The intern, Regina Shvets, spent one month with the agency completing her community rotation. Shvets took on several responsibilities including implementing some new ideas to promote the children's well-being through healthy eating habits.

Shvets' nutrition work experiences included:

- **Providing nutrition education** in Early Head Start classrooms, which exposed children to a variety of healthy fruits and vegetables.
- **Instituting "Try it Thursday,"** which was an opportunity for Head Start children to learn basic nutrition facts and taste new nutritious foods each Thursday.
- **Arranging a supermarket tour** to help Head Start parents learn to buy healthy foods on a limited budget.
- **Performing growth assessments** in children.
- **Conducting nutrition analysis** of USDA menus for infants and children.
- **Revising menus** to accommodate children with food allergies.



Head Start Intern Regina Shvets provides nutrition education to EHS children.

"Proper nutrition is important to helping children grow, develop and stay healthy," said GMVCHS Nutritionist Daniela Sensini. "Shvets helped provide valuable information for families in the program."

ECCC Families Recognize Staff Contributions

National Teacher Appreciation Week and Child Care Professionals Week were celebrated this year from May 1-7 in schools across the county and at Fairfax County's Employees Child Care Center.

"Every year we look forward to this opportunity to recognize our staff," said ECCC Director Ruth Stover. "From the teachers, to the administrative and support staff, to our wonderful cook and the Job Discovery, Inc. kitchen helpers, each person is an important part of the work ECCC does to provide quality care for the children of Fairfax County Government employees."

Families appreciate the welcoming environment and nurturing, child-centered learning program provided by the ECCC staff.



ECCC's staff left to right, including Ashley Thomas, Amy Payne, Fatima Ataba, Bridgett Brown and Noor Al Obaedi celebrate Teacher Appreciation Week.



ECCC's staff Shirley Palmer and Ashley Thomas appreciate the recognition from ECCC families.

Child Care Professionals Week!



Child Care Community Receives Proclamation from Board of Supervisors

At their April 26 meeting, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors declared May 1-7, 2016 Child Care Professionals Week in Fairfax County. The board joined with many other organizations nationwide in acknowledging child care professionals and their important work supporting families and providing early care and education for children from birth through elementary school. A reception hosted by the Child Care Advisory Council and OFC was held immediately following the presentation. The Office for Children is honored to work in partnership with early childhood and school age professionals and appreciates all that they do to care for the children of Fairfax County.



Left to right: Rosemary Kendall (CCAC member), Monica Jackson (chairman, CCAC), Fahemeh Pirzadeh (executive director, Reston Children's Center and co-president, NVAEYC), Ginny Holloway (co-president NVAEYC) and Mercedes Dash (CCAC member).

CEPS and CCAR Support Providers' Community Outreach

On Saturday, April 2, a group of family child care providers from the Lorton Hagel Circle community worked in partnership with staff from the Office for Children to provide an informative outreach event to families in their



Family child care providers offer activities for children in the Lorton Hagel Circle Community at this event.

neighborhood. This event was organized by area family child care providers to inform local families of the many child care options and resources that are available to them in their community.

With support from the Office for Children, the providers set up display boards highlighting their quality child care programs. Ivory Smith, child care specialist with OFC's Community Education and Provider Services program presented information on the importance of regulated care. Child Care Assistance and Referral Child Care Specialists Jamey Spillers and Katie Robertson provided information about the child care subsidy program which provides financial assistance for child care to



CEPS's Ivory Smith and CCAR's Katie Robertson and Jamey Spillers assist family child care providers with educating residents in their community about quality child care.

income-eligible families who are working or in school.

In addition, the families and children enjoyed participating together in many fun activities like story time and arts and crafts projects set up by the family child care providers.

Smith stated that "it was amazing to see the pride these providers have for their own programs. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to support them in providing education and outreach in their community."

Kids on Stage: A Global Experience!



More than 500 children from 37 SACC centers recently took the stage in front of a standing-room-only crowd of families, friends and teachers for “Kids on Stage: A Global Experience.” This wonderful performing arts showcase was inspired by the world-wide adventures children have experienced as part of this year’s SACC curriculum.

While preparing for the showcases children explored various aspects of the performing arts, visual arts and language arts. SACC teachers coordinated the event and worked with the children to write and learn songs, choreograph dances, design costumes and practice routines.

Songs and performances showcased each child’s unique and special talents. Performances were proudly introduced by a child from each of

the SACC centers accompanied by SACC’s masters of ceremonies, Chris Holmes and Leslie Schmidt.

The “Global Experience” showcase featured performances from all over the world. Some centers chose to perform original songs penned by the children and their SACC teachers. Bucknell SACC performed “Teach Me to Speak Japanese,” an original song by SACC teacher, Chris Scott. The song incorporated basic Japanese phrases to a hip-hop beat.

Other performances featured familiar tunes. The children at Fort Hunt SACC performed the Lion King’s “Circle of Life” dressed in detailed costumes representing the wildlife of Mali, including galloping gazelles and giant giraffes.

Children from Union Mill SACC presented a traditional hula dance to



a non-traditional beat. The performance by Dranesville SACC brought a modern Bollywood style dance to the stage complete with traditional clothing and jewelry.

Each year at the showcases SACC collects donated goods to benefit individuals served by FACETS and United Community Ministries. Regional Supervisor Patricia Cantu said “The children look forward to seeing all of the donations. The opportunity to help make a difference by giving back to the community makes them feel proud.”



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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