

Fostering Success in School and Beyond

For area families, a lot of effort goes into preparing children to start school in the fall. Throughout Fairfax County, several Back to School Fairs have been held to support families with children of all ages. OFC staff has been on hand at several of these events to provide resources for families with young children.

These fairs were held in four high schools throughout the county, including Robert E. Lee in Springfield, J.E.B. Stuart in Falls Church, Mt. Vernon in Alexandria, and South Lakes in Reston. Attendance varied between 1,000-4,000 people at each of these events, which featured a variety of county and community organizations with resources that promote school success.

The fairs were held in areas of the county with a large population of students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch. To help support families, organizers and sponsors provided services on site such as free haircuts, and health screenings and resources

including donated clothing and school supplies.

Several OFC programs including Community Education and Provider Services, Child Care Assistance and Referral, School Age Child Care and Head Start had staff participate at these events. The back to school fairs provide an avenue to raise awareness of OFC programs and services that can be valuable resources to families. Staff was able to provide educational materials, demonstrate the child care database on OFC's website, emphasize the importance of choosing regulated child care, and reach out to families that might qualify for programs such as Virginia Preschool Initiative and Head Start.

"OFC staff looks forward to these events each year," said CEPS Recruitment Specialist Shauna Skerman. "These interactive fairs are a great way to meet families and children at the start of a new school year, and connect them to resources that can support children's success in school and beyond."



Pilar Vilcarronero of CEPS provides resources to families at the J.E.B. Stuart High School Pyramid Back to School Fair.



Head Start staff April Grayson and SACC staff LaTasha McLain sharing information with the public at the Mt. Vernon Back to School fair.



Marilyn Frost of CEPS and Jenna Piombo of CCAR engage with families at the Lee Pyramid fair.

SACC Camp Discovery, Fun for Everyone!

SACC's Camp Discovery recently concluded a wonderful season. For seven weeks this summer, rising 1st - 7th graders enjoyed the opportunity to participate in a variety of fun experiences at 27 summer SACC locations across the county.

SACC's experienced and dynamic teachers guided children through activities designed to nurture their creativity and develop their talents and skills. Children were able to choose their area of focus and exploration, also known as "cabins," based on their interests in art, the performing arts and sports.

Experiences in the Artist's Cabin encouraged children to investigate the science of art and explore a variety of art forms such as textile art, acrylic canvas painting, 3D art and sculpting. Children with an



Children at Mason Crest enjoy spending time with friends during outdoor activities.

interest in theatre had opportunities in the Performer's Cabin to choreograph dances, illuminate the stage with shadow light performances, bring legendary stories to life, and develop clues during a week of mystery theatre. In the Athlete's Cabin children enjoyed developing their skills in basketball, baseball and track and field, and coming together with other centers for flag football and soccer tournaments.

Camp Discovery also provided opportunities for campers to participate in outdoor play,

swimming, live performances, professional sporting events and other field trips. Centers welcomed special visitors such as Great Falls Rugby whose coaches provided skills clinics at several SACC centers, and Fairfax County's Fire and Rescue Life Safety Division which visited each center and reinforced safety awareness concepts through fun relay events for the children.

Each day offered new and exciting adventures at Camp Discovery, a great place to be a kid!



Children from Ravensworth take a field trip to the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore where they enjoy making their own creations.



Children in the Performer's Cabin deliver a great dance routine during halftime of the Washington Mystics' basketball game.

Encouraging Emergency Preparedness

September is Emergency Preparedness Month!

The Office for Children is reaching out to the child care community on the importance of updating their emergency preparedness plans via social media, direct mail and a dedicated webpage on this topic.

This year OFC is encouraging child care programs to get prepared with a theme that echoes Ready.gov's national theme, "Don't Wait, Communicate; Make Your Emergency Plan Today!"

The OFC postcard and website contain resources that can help child care

programs to prepare for an emergency, such as:

- Phone numbers and websites for a variety of local and national emergency management and public safety organizations.
- Registration information for the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management's program Fairfax Alerts, which sends short messages about local emergencies to individual communication devices.
- Online resources to help clarify the emergency preparedness requirements for state-licensed and county-permitted child care facilities.



"Emergency plans help ensure child care programs are best prepared to protect the safety of children and staff when an emergency occurs," explained OFC Director, Anne-Marie Twohie. "This year, we hoped to highlight the importance not only of maintaining plans, but also encourage programs to share that information with the families they serve, to help spread awareness."

Touching Heart Sponsors EHS Family Picnic

Children and families from the Early Head Start Family Child Care program gathered for a fun picnic at the Pennino building on August 6. Families enjoyed this opportunity to get to know each other and share an exciting day of activities with their children.

Children enjoyed playing outdoors at the Employees' Child Care Center. They explored the sandbox and playground equipment, as well as games and activities like blowing bubbles and hula hooping. Each child received a summer fun bucket filled with a book, sidewalk chalk, bubbles, and other small toys to take home and remember the day.

The picnic lunch and activities were sponsored by a local non-profit organization, Touching Heart. Its mission is to engage youth in serving our community to instill them with a sense of compassion and empathy. Touching Heart's founder, Helen Yi worked with Head Start staff, and community teens with the program were instrumental in fundraising and planning the picnic.

In addition, before the picnic, EHS Family Child Care Specialist Cynthia Brandt met with several Touching Heart elementary groups. Brandt explained the challenges faced by many children and families in Head Start, and staff's role in supporting families. Afterward, the children in the Touching Heart afterschool program helped put together the summer fun buckets for the young children attending the picnic.



"This event was truly a compilation of many people coming together to create a special day for children and their families to enjoy," said Brandt. "This included Allison Gallagher, a Touching Hart volunteer whose book drive provided books for the families to take home, the children from the Floris and Lees Corner Elementary Touching Heart groups, and Helen Yi and the teens who organized the fundraisers."



A child from the EHS program receives a summer fun bucket containing books, games and supplies from Touching Heart founder Helen Yi and Devin, a local teen who helped lead the fundraising.

EAT and RUN Receives NACo Achievement Award



The National Association of Counties recently awarded the Office for Children a 2016 Achievement Award for EAT and RUN. These awards honor innovative, effective county government programs that enhance services for residents.

EAT and RUN was developed to help combat childhood obesity by promoting physical activity and healthy eating in family child care homes. The program helps county-permitted family child care providers meet the requirements of the county's Home Child Care Ordinance, which includes providing adequate space both indoors and outdoors for physical

activity, and adhering to age-appropriate nutritional guidelines set forth by the United States Department of Agriculture.

EAT and RUN has been an ongoing initiative in Community Education and Provider Services since late 2013. To date, approximately 520 family child care providers have attended an EAT and RUN workshop to learn how to use the book and incorporate the 15 "EAT" and 15 "RUN" activities in their programs.

EAT and RUN has also proven to be an effective tool for retaining family child care providers and recruiting others to join the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program, which reimburses them for the nutritious meals they provide to children.



Family child care providers take part in an activity at a recent EAT and RUN workshop.

of multiple county agencies and community partners, encourages healthy lifestyle choices. A continued partnership with these organizations has provided avenues for sharing the book with local and regional partners working with young children, as well as other CACFP sponsor organizations.

Started in 1970, NACo's annual Achievement Award Program is designed to recognize innovative county government programs. Each nominee is judged on its own merits and not against other applications received.



Staff collaborated with Live Healthy Fairfax on the development of the EAT and RUN program and book. Live Healthy Fairfax, comprised

This summer, 117 family child care providers have attended EAT and RUN workshops to learn how to implement the nutrition and fitness strategies with children in their child care programs.

O F C 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.



A Fairfax County, VA Publication



Reasonable accommodations made upon request; call 703-324-8000 or TTY 711.