

OFC Receives \$250,000 State Grant

The Office for Children is among five communities in Virginia to receive a \$250,000 grant through the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, in consultation with the Virginia Department of Education. These local communities are recognized for proposing innovative approaches to ensure all children eligible for the Virginia Preschool Initiative are able to access programs.

Each of these school readiness proposals is built on deep and broad community collaboration and draws on entrepreneurial thinking to uniquely address local barriers to delivery and access to high-quality preschool.

The Office for Children will work with family child care programs in areas of Fairfax County with concentrated poverty to provide high-quality

preschool services. OFC programs including Child Care Assistance and Referral, Community Education and Provider Services, and the Institute for Early Learning will collaborate with key community partner Fairfax Futures to implement this initiative. The grant will help to fund innovations such as: mentoring and on-site technical assistance to support high-quality preschool experiences for children in family child care programs; and blending of funding to provide full work-day care.

“We are delighted to have this opportunity to partner with family child care providers in our community to bring quality services to additional children and their families,” said OFC School Readiness Coordinator Betsi Closter.



Race to the Finish Children and Families Enjoy Annual SACC Track Meet

More than 800 children from 47 School Age Child Care centers laced up their shoes and stepped up to the starting line to take part in SACC's 7th Annual

Track and Field Meet at Robert E. Lee High School in Springfield. Families and friends filled the stands ready to watch the children participate in a day full of

exciting races and other events.

Throughout the spring, SACC teachers worked with the children on conditioning and skill development. They also emphasized the importance of good

sportsmanship and fun. In preparation for the meet, children practiced their track and field skills in a variety of ways, each designed to foster both children's self-confidence and a sense of team work. On the day of the event, children had the opportunity to challenge themselves in the 50-yard dash, 100-yard Dash, javelin and shot put throw, and 4 x 1 relay.

Family members were eager to get involved and assist SACC staff by helping to coach and cheer on the children throughout the day. The multi-center event was a huge success for each child, their proud families and the dedicated SACC staff.



Children enjoy participating in a variety of events including the javelin throw and 50-yard dash at SACC's Track and Field Meet.



Leadership Academy Graduates Take Careers to the Next Level

From February through June, the Department of Family Services Leadership Academy featured a variety of challenging activities to build leadership skills. Recent graduates included four Office for Children staff members including La-Reiphia Jackson of Head Start, Daniel Baum and Megan Clark of Child Care Assistance and Referral, and Leslie Schmidt of School Age Child Care.

Staff praised the experience. Jackson said, “the Leadership Academy enhanced my ability in any situation to be intentional to put into action the learned tools, strategies and leadership knowledge I have gained to make a real difference in my life and the lives of others.” Baum said “the experience empowered me to take charge and step out of my comfort zone to take my career to the next level.”

In DFS-LA, managers from within DFS and the Fairfax community led a series of six Learning Modules exploring different leadership topics. In another popular component of the program participants were paired with a mentor to discuss their career goals and strategies to achieve them.

Participants completed assignments between sessions. This culminated with a final group project and presentation on the topic of creating a sustainable “culture of happiness” in the DFS workplace. In addition to the more traditional presentations, Baum explained that his group, performed a skit about workplace emotions that was a parody of the movie “Inside Out.” Team members acted out negative and positive meetings, demonstrating the feelings that each employee had and the impact on the office.



La-Reiphia Jackson, Leslie Schmidt, Megan Clark and Daniel Baum completed the DFS Leadership Academy in June.

This experience was truly transformative for each of the participants and as Schmidt summed up, “It was a great opportunity to see ways to grow in this organization and help shape the culture of our workplace.”

Clark was excited to say that “The DFS-LA experience is helping me with my work at OFC by getting me to think deeper about situations not only with my co-workers but also with my clients so that I take the time to see other perspectives. DFS-LA also made me aware of the different types of leaders and how I can be a leader right where I am or in any role for my future.”



Integrating Digital Devices In Early Childhood Settings

Digital devices have become a pervasive part of our society, and starting at a young age, children are exposed to screens of all sizes. This was the topic of a panel discussion at the recent National Smart Start Conference in North Carolina.

Moderated by Claire Lerner of Zero to Three, the panel discussion centered

around “Child Development in the Digital Age: The Reality of Screen Time.” Rachel Martin, an instructor and mentor with the Institute for Early Learning, was invited to sit on the panel. Through her work in early education over the last nine years, Martin has honed a specialty in early literacy and digital fluency.

Each panelist presented a different perspective on the issue of screen time. Dr. Deborah Nichols of Purdue University spoke about research and the hard data on the impact of screens on children. Martin explained how to interpret the data and apply it to practical day to day use in programs. While the final presenter, Jeremy Boyle with the Fred Rogers Center, explained broader themes in child development, such as how it is changing and how these changes might impact human interactions and society as a whole.

The panel discussion provided the backdrop for some lively discussion and useful feedback among the nearly 200

participants. It was a great opportunity to share OFC resources like the “Tapping into Technology” booklet which provides screentime guidance.

The conference was an opportunity for early education leaders, mentors, instructors and strategists to gather new information, hear other perspectives and share knowledge. Martin explained that the conference confirmed a message often presented by IFEL and OFC regarding the integration of digital devices.

“Being mindful of what a child is doing with technology and being actively involved in that process is so important. Technology can be a powerful creative tool for a child to learn, explore and create. These are also skills that all children will need to have in the future,” said Martin.

Only through understanding these tools can educators and parents begin to help children use them mindfully.

SACC Creatively Celebrates County History

Cardboard Boat Regatta Invites Nostalgia



SACC staff, county Board of Supervisors members, and elected officials celebrate at the regatta.

This year's Springfield Days festival was full of adventure, as approximately 300 children and their teachers from 26 School Age Child Care centers had the chance to test the seaworthiness of the cardboard boats they had worked on for

Each year, Kali Pelligrino, Head Teacher at Kings Glen SACC, has worked with the Springfield Days Planning Committee and SACC centers program wide to coordinate SACC's participation in the regatta. In preparation for the event, children and their SACC teachers worked together to research, design and build one-of-a-kind boats, constructed from cardboard, duct tape and a lot of determination. In celebration of Fairfax County's 275th anniversary, all of SACC's 26 boats reflected the history of the county, including its innovations, transportation, celebrations, businesses and agriculture.

Waples Mill SACC's Mill House was awarded "Best of Fairfax 275th Anniversary."

Mason Crest SACC received the honor of "Pride of the Regatta" for their vessel, SACC Intelligence Agency.

Greenbriar East SACC received the Team Spirit award for their boat representing the 29 Diner, which was established in 1947 and is now a registered Historic Landmark.

Kings Glen SACC was recognized with the "Best Costume" award for their entry Bookworms depicting the county's first bookmobile complete with librarian.

Voted as recipient of the Titanic award for "Most Likely to Sink," Orange Hunt SACC's boat representing the Mount Vernon Compact successfully competed in the races.

The Cardboard Boat Regatta is always an exciting example of teamwork and a fun way for the children to end the school year. The regatta is also a highlight of the year for the SACC teachers and families that proudly cheer on the children from the shore.



Children from Kings Glen SACC paddle vigorously to shore at the 28th Annual Springfield Days Cardboard Boat Regatta.

Graham Road SACC's boat, a replica of the old Graham Road School, won the

SACC races, while several SACC centers were recognized for their unique and creative boat designs in the Judges Choice categories.

weeks. The 28th Annual Springfield Days Cardboard Boat Regatta held in June at Lake Accotink was a much-anticipated event for the children and their families!



Ravensworth SACC designed the "Big Red Raven" to recognize the Greater Springfield Volunteer Fire Department, Station 22.



Greenbriar East SACC received the Team Spirit Award for representing the 29 Diner, a Fairfax County Historic Landmark.



Forestdale SACC sets sail in the "Falcon Express," modeled after a Springfield Post Office mail truck.

Head Start Children Learn About Nutrition on Field Trip



A Field Trip Factory volunteer engages children as they tour their local Giant.

During the month of June, the children at Greater Mount Vernon Head Start toured their local Giant grocery store. This was the first time Head Start has partnered with Field Trip Factory to coordinate a free grocery tour. Leading up to the field trip, the children were exposed to several nutrition lessons that emphasized healthy eating habits.

During the grocery tour children visited several departments. This hands-on learning experience allowed the children to learn about different foods, and where they come from. Each stop

helped to reinforce the healthy ideas from their nutrition lessons.

The children visited the deli and tasted slices of lean turkey, touched the lobster from the seafood section, and learned about different types of fruits and vegetables. They had the opportunity to weigh fruit on the scale to see how much it would cost.

In the dairy section, the tour guide explained to the children that they need to drink enough milk so they can grow tall and strong. At the last stop on the tour, the pharmacist explained to

the children that the pharmacy is where to get medicine when you are sick.

As the tour wrapped up, everyone received a goody bag full of healthy treats to take home.

“Going to the grocery store and exploring healthy foods helps children learn to make healthy choices later in life,” said GMVCHS Nutrition Coordinator Daniela Sensini. Head Start plans to continue yearly grocery store tours to expose children to new learning experiences.



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.



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