

Head Start Welcomes Visitors to Open Houses

County Officials and Community Celebrate National Head Start Awareness Month



Supervisor Cathy Hudgins and Head Start Director Jennifer Branch visit Gum Springs Glen Early Head Start.



The Head Start program celebrated Head Start Awareness Month by hosting a series of open houses at locations across the county. These included Greater Mount Vernon Community Head Start and Early Head Start, Fairfax County Public Schools, Early Head Start Family Child Care homes and Higher Horizons Day Care Center, Inc.

County, school and community officials were invited to visit Head Start programs and spend time with staff and children, reading a favorite story, building with blocks, painting a picture or sharing in snack time.

Program staff and children were excited to welcome visitors to learn about the curriculum, and experience a typical day in the program.

Board of Supervisors liaison to the Head Start Policy Council, Cathy Hudgins visited multiple program locations. Supervisor Penny Gross, spent time at Higher Horizons Day Care Center in the Mason District, which she represents.

In addition, School Board Vice Chair Karen Corbett Sanders visited a Head Start classroom at Riverside Elementary School.



Supervisor Penny Gross and Higher Horizons Family Resource Manager Brittany Scott-Pinkney.



School Board Vice Chair Karen Corbett Sanders visits Riverside Elementary HS.



HS Director Jennifer Branch visits an Early Head Start Family Child Care program.



Sup. Cathy Hudgins helps out at an Early Head Start Family Child Care home.

New Video Provides Child's Eye View of Nature

OFC, Park Authority and Fairfax Futures partner to connect families to nature

A new video, "Connecting with Nature: Exploring the Natural Environment with Young Children," highlights ways that young children and families can enjoy nature together in Fairfax County. The video, filmed at Hidden Oaks Nature Center, features Park Authority Naturalist Briget McArdle taking families on a nature walk. She introduces young children to living creatures including a resident box turtle, beetles living under a log, and other experiences designed to help them and their families learn more about the world in which we live.

"Young children learn best through hands-on learning opportunities," said Fairfax County Office for Children Director Anne-Marie Twohie. "We were delighted to partner with Fairfax Futures and Fairfax County Park Authority on this useful resource intended to encourage shared family experiences that build awareness and appreciation of our county's natural environment."

Produced by the Teaching Channel, the video was made possible through a grant from Dominion Energy to Fairfax Futures and was created in

collaboration with Fairfax County Office for Children and Fairfax County Park Authority's Hidden Oaks Nature Center.

"Nature centers offer a wonderful place for families to introduce their young children to nature's beauty and to the role they play in protecting it for future generations," said Suzanne Holland, director of Hidden Oaks Nature Center.

To see the video visit <https://youtu.be/BUo7kh-0nvA>.

CONNECTING WITH NATURE

Exploring the Natural Environment
With Young Children



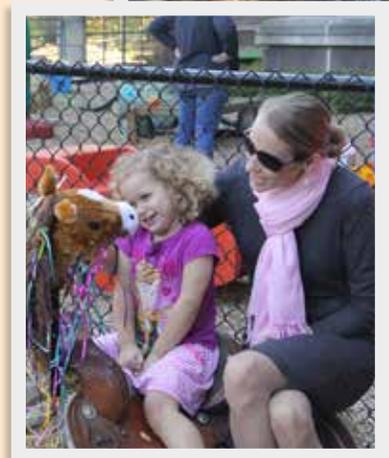
Excitement showed on the children's faces, as they hurried onto the familiar playground which had been transformed for the fall season. A patch of miniature pumpkins was "growing" in the sandbox, a maze of haybales had been set up for exploration, a pretend pony had been constructed so children could enjoy "taking rides."

This outdoor environment was thoughtfully designed by the center staff for the children and families to explore and enjoy!

Families Enjoy ECCC Fall Festival

The Employees' Child Care Center's fall festival was a great opportunity for family members to visit and share in the fun with their children. Painting paper-sack pumpkins, climbing over hay bales, and playing bean bag toss were just a few of the fun learning experiences for children.

This event had something to offer children who were various ages and stages up to pre-K. Face painting; exploring gourds and corn maize; "riding" in the hay wagon; and tasting seasonal goodies like crisp green apples, warm pumpkin muffins and apple cider were some other fun activities families shared.



Be the Hero, You Want to See

SACC donation drives benefit hurricane victims

Children and staff at Mount Vernon Woods and Hayfield SACC collected toiletries for the victims of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.



The U.S. suffered a catastrophic hurricane season in 2017. Three Category 4 storms made landfall affecting populations in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands affecting millions of people.

Children and staff at SACC centers recognized they had the ability to help those impacted by the hurricanes and took action. Several SACC centers responded to the need by arranging a service project to help the people of Puerto Rico. Children at Mount Vernon Woods and Hayfield SACC centers collected a total of 441 toiletry items

for the hurricane victims. Some of the items were donated to Unidos por Puerto Rico (a collection center for disaster relief in Chantilly, VA), while other toiletry items were donated to a church in Penuelas, PR, the hometown of a Mount Vernon Woods SACC parent. Children at Chesterbrook SACC also collected toiletry items, first aid supplies, flashlights and batteries for Puerto Rico.

At Weyanoke SACC, children and staff collected school supplies for Care Elementary School which is located in

Miami, an area of Florida impacted by the hurricane.

Through this year's SACC curriculum, "Heroes, Trendsetters and Icons," children have been learning about people who have made a difference in our world's past, present and future. As part of the curriculum focus, children are encouraged to become community champions by making a difference for others in our community and beyond through participation in local and global community service projects like these.



CEPS Staff Emphasizes Emergency Preparedness

Community events and expanded workshops provide opportunities for outreach

Office for Children staff is working hard to spread the word about the importance of emergency preparedness in family child care settings. CEPS is partnering with the Office of Emergency Management to expand its current Emergency Preparedness business course for family child care providers to two 2-hour classes.

Participants are learning to enhance their emergency response plans through discussing improved strategies for communication and evacuation, as well as learning about what supplies are needed for a mobile emergency kit. They have the opportunity to:

- Receive an individual review of each provider's emergency plan with suggestions for how to strengthen it.
- Register for Fairfax Alerts.
- Receive an assessment of any changes needed to each provider's emergency supply kit to best support their readiness.

To raise awareness among families about preparedness in child care programs, CEPS Child Care Specialist Cindy Gonzales presented on this topic at the first Preparedness Awareness Weekend hosted by the Office of Emergency Management. Gonzales provided information to help families

understand county and state emergency preparedness requirements for child care programs.

Gonzales explained that, "An important aspect of being prepared as a family includes knowing that children will be well cared for no matter where they are during an emergency." Information about how to spot a well-prepared child care program is extremely helpful to families searching for quality care.

CEPS will continue to utilize opportunities to inform the community about emergency preparedness in child care.

Fall for Fairfax Fun

OFC Booth Explores What Makes a Hero

Children and families who stopped by the Office for Children booth at Fall for Fairfax had such fun answering the question, “What Kind of Hero are You?” Families tried exciting learning experiences such as making mini-heroes, designing a hero mask, and participating in a superhero soccer shootout. Staff from a variety of OFC programs spent the weekend working in the booth and supporting families as they tried all the activities.

The School Age Child Care Program’s curriculum, Heroes, Trendsetters and Icons, was the inspiration for the OFC booth this year. Children at the booth and in the program are being encouraged to explore influencers throughout history and to discover how to be their own best hero.

In keeping with the hero theme, many families at Fall for Fairfax enjoyed the opportunity to take pictures of their children as they posed with their faces poking above a superhero cutout. Positive, heroic qualities such as courage, kindness, loyalty and caring surrounded the cutout.

The popular wrecking balls activity returned from last year, giving children a chance to build and knock down

structures and learn a little about physics in the process. The book nook provided a quiet spot for families to take a short break to recharge. This was also a great way to share information with families about OFC programs.



OFC staff helped families with children of all ages enjoy a variety of activities all weekend.



Sisters keep busy designing their own heroes.



Building structures and knocking them down at the Wrecking balls activity was a fun way to explore physics.



The Superhero Soccer shootout was a popular activity for children of all ages.



Parents enjoyed taking photos of their children wearing handmade hero masks with this hero cutout.