



## SACC Winter Camp Explores Heroes of the Animal Kingdom

The School Age Child Care Winter Program, Call of the Wild: Animal Heroes, offered two weeks of fun and adventure for children in kindergarten – sixth grade during the Fairfax County Public Schools recent Winter Break.

As part of each week’s adventures, children set out on a journey to explore the animal kingdom in search of real life and fictional animal heroes whose extraordinary stories inspire the hero in all of us. From aquatic creatures, to forest wildlife and farm animals, children learned about amazing creatures and critters whose courageous actions and compassionate behaviors have made a difference. SACC teachers facilitated children’s explorations with fun experiences in science, technology, world culture, literature, media, sports and the arts.

Children at **Shrewewood SACC** created original animal masks and pet portraits in celebration of their favorite PAWsome heroes. They also sewed special blankets which they donated to the local animal shelter.

At **Hunters Woods SACC**, children hand-crocheted tiny barn owls as they discovered heroes on the homestead. They learned about the habitat and diet of the owls and crafted items the owls would need to survive.

At the end of each week each center held a culminating event. **Hunters Woods SACC** held an adoption event for their one-of-a-kind owls. Children at **Centreville SACC** performed an original play featuring the aquatic heroes from “Finding Nemo” and “Shark Tales.” Each center’s events and performances highlighted children’s experiences and discoveries.

SACC’s Winter Program is offered at 23 locations countywide providing families the convenience of enrolling children in a center near work or home. Coming soon – SACC’s Spring Break Program, The Written Page, Exploring Literary Trendsetters and Icons, offered from March 26 – 30, 2018.



Photos capturing winter fun at McNair SACC:

- 1 Children create colorful bird feeders covered in nut butter and seeds.
- 2 Children make foam flowers to create an animal habitat.
- 3 Designing giant snowflakes is fun!
- 4 Children put their imaginations to work with building blocks.
- 5 Children perform a joyful dance routine while wearing original handpainted attire.





# A Glimpse Inside Early Head Start



A moving new video offers a view into the Early Head Start program. The video is brought to life by candid conversations with parents about ways Head Start has supported their children’s learning and their families’ success. It features tours of EHS center-based classrooms and family child care programs which support children’s school readiness. It also highlights the benefits of Early Head Start.

Video testimonials from parents put a human face to the work Head Start does. Norma an EHS parent explains why she values EHS, “They [Early Head Start] want everybody to succeed, they’re not just doing it because of the kids, but they’re trying to help their parents be successful, because the way I see it, is if I’m successful, it’s almost guaranteed that my son will be successful too.”

Watch the video on the Fairfax County Government YouTube channel here: <http://bit.ly/2x zr7Xz> and help spread the word!



Helping families find quality child care is a large part of the overall mission for the Child Care Assistance and Referral program. Whether it is through providing resource information and referrals to families, engaging with the public at community outreach events, or through providing a child care subsidy that helps make quality care more affordable for parents, CCAR is working toward this goal.

## CCAR in the Community

CCAR staff is active throughout Fairfax, recently canvassing neighborhoods and posting materials in businesses to raise awareness of the services CCAR provides. At community outreach events,

## CCAR Helps Families Find Quality Child Care

resource fairs, employee health benefit events, and presentations to recipients of other county services, CCAR staff helps families to:

- Assess their own child care needs.
- Understand child care options.
- Get a sense of the average cost of care in the region.
- Apply for child care financial assistance.

### Online Resources

CCAR also provides a wealth of online resources for families including:

- A searchable database of more than 2,300 regulated child care programs.
- Questions and checklist for prospective child care programs.
- Approximate weekly rates for child care in the county.

### Child Care Subsidy

In addition, child care assistance may be available to families that are income eligible and demonstrate a need for care due to employment, enrollment in school or participation in training. CCAR provides assistance with the cost of child care for children from birth to age 12 (and up to age 18 for families with children with special needs) in family child care homes, centers and school-aged child care.

Finding quality child care is one of the most important decisions facing working families. “The support and guidance CCAR staff provides makes a tough decision easier for many families,” says CCAR Director Flor Philips.

Help spread the word to ensure that families are aware of all the services CCAR offers.

# Exploring Loose Parts

## VPI Workshop Series Promotes Open-ended Learning for Children

Have you ever marveled at the way that children can spend hours playing with the simplest everyday items? Children have always played with found materials such as rocks, sticks, cans and string. They can take almost any commonplace object and find a series of imaginative ways to use it. For a child at play, a stick can become a sword, a cooking utensil, a magic wand, and so much more.



An assortment of loose parts (found items) used in the VPI Peer Share..

In the early childhood setting, the term “loose parts” describes these commonplace found items that children use in self-guided play. A few other examples include buttons, fabric, empty bottles, pine cones, tree bark, shells, keys, small boxes, and cardboard tubes, etc.

### Understanding Loose Parts

Joyce Yang with Virginia Preschool Initiative and Liz Cassidy of Main St. Child Development Center developed the latest VPI Peer Share Workshop as an opportunity to share about loose parts with colleagues working at other VPI sites. At this two-part series, the facilitators shared their experiences with loose parts and explained how using these items allows children to explore and learn

in an age-appropriate and inspirational way.

### Loose Parts Theory

In 1971, architect Simon Nicholson published an article detailing his “Theory of Loose Parts.” Nicholson asserted that children prefer and benefit from playing with items that they can move around; combine and take apart; and use endlessly to design, build and create. Nicholson explained that access to materials like these provides a natural laboratory for children to readily experiment as they explore and discover the world around them. (Nicholson 1971)

Loose parts provide opportunities for open-ended, play-based learning, and they support the acquisition of critical thinking, math, language and social emotional skills that children need in kindergarten.



VPI educators plan learning experiences for children using loose parts.

In the workshop, Yang and Cassidy reviewed the theory behind loose parts. Participants also received the book “Loose Parts: Inspiring Play in Young Children” by Daly, Beloglovsky and Daly to help provide additional information.



Liz Cassidy of Main St. Child Development Center works with educators.

Yang explained, “Instead of teaching a particular skill or strategy, this course focused on a philosophy and asked teachers to bring their ideas forward.”

### Educators Find Success with Integrating Loose Parts

During the sessions, participants explored a variety of loose parts, and discovered ways the materials could enrich their programs. Together in small groups, they planned learning experiences for children.

At the next workshop session, many educators shared photos and stories of how children enthusiastically explored the loose parts they had introduced. One of the participants was so inspired that she asked for follow up mentoring from Liz Cassidy to transform her classroom environment to be consistent with loose parts philosophy.

To learn more about loose parts theory, visit [www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/2015/loose-parts](http://www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/2015/loose-parts).

Nicholson, S. 1971. “The Theory of Loose Parts: How Not to Cheat Children.” *Landscape Architect*, 62: 30-34.

# Length of Service

Fairfax County recognizes staff who have reached service milestones of 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 or more years of employment with the county. Here are Office for Children staff who reached milestones in 2017.

## 10 Years

Olivia Alexander  
Laura Andrews  
Estela Bernal  
Vanessa Byrd  
Betty Callejas  
Carmen Carmargo  
Margaret Chavarria  
Kari Cogswell  
Janice Cole  
Ryan Corcoran  
Erin Ellis  
Abenet Essayas  
Lakaty Evans  
Benjamin Figley  
Kerry Franks  
Stephen Fuller  
Brandon Garner  
Frewoini Gebre  
Merih Ghebremedhin  
Anne Goldstein-Rugel  
Tomia Green  
Denis Gully  
Christopher Holmes  
Taisha Israel  
Christina Leonen  
Xiaohang Luo  
Amy MacIntyre  
Zahra Malekpour  
Tanya Martinez  
Lucas Messier  
Angelica Mitchell  
Carols Moreira  
Mei Ouyang  
Joann Paige

Siba Pandey  
Ylisa Patrick  
Maasoomah Pouravaz  
Matthew Rice  
Thomas Rosen  
Daniel Simpkins  
Keestra Smith  
Ledreka Swann  
Maddalena Tyner  
Natalia Vargas  
Diedria Williams  
Cathy Wilson  
Eric Womack

## 15 Years

Christopher Barker  
Wendy Bellinger  
Jeanette Brown  
Peggi Calvin  
Esther Cheryan  
Michael Derrick  
Richard Fatheree  
Lilian Foran  
Randy Hawkins  
Icy Hollingsworth  
Wayne Howard  
Tony Humphrey  
Dorie Irby  
Tracey Johnson  
Patricia Jordan  
Kathleen King  
Carol Klosterman  
Christin McGowan  
Natalie Mitchell  
Malvina Morrison

Nikki Neely  
Alexa O'Flynn  
Latisha Robinson  
Leslie Schmidt  
Lawrence Simmons  
Paul Smith  
Ember Taylor  
Andrea Wilson  
Nicole Umpierrez  
Melanie Zissios

## 20 Years

Thomas Collins  
Ramiro Cortez  
Jennifer Dixon-Duff  
Richard Hershey  
Jermaine Lovelace  
Casey McCollough  
Michael Pounder  
Melanie Richey  
Deborah Weigand  
Carmisha Wiggins

## 25 Years

Bridgett Alexander  
Trevor Crabtree  
Julian Gaither  
Rodney Mills  
Kristoffer Zablackas

## 30 Years

Patricia Ludwig  
Dian Tublin