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IN CENTRE COUNTY



Winter 2007

From the Executive Director:

First of all, I want to welcome our readers to the busy Early Childhood scene of fall, 2007! If you followed the dramatic story of the budget passage this summer, you know that the fate of three legs of the early childhood quality improvement table were in serious jeopardy until the last moments of the budget negotiations in early July.

Smart Start volunteers devoted passion, time, and energy to ensure that Keystone STARS, Child Care Works, and the new Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs were fully funded. To our great relief and satisfaction, our local legislators heard our concerns and voted for full funding.

As a result, three local agencies and partnerships applied and were awarded new PA Pre-K Counts funds, which enabled 140 Centre County 3- and 4-year-olds to enroll in high quality pre-K settings. We are proud of this progress, and to celebrate and thank our early childhood leaders and supporters, we held the **Red Carpet Appreciation Event** on October 11 in partnership with the Pennsylvania Child Care Association (PACCA) annual convention in State College. (See lead story, photos, and interview with Deputy Secretary of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning [OCDEL], Harriet Dichter, who took part in the celebration.)

In keeping with the increased pace and enthusiasm at the state level, Smart

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RED CARPET TOUR LAUNCHES LOCAL PRE-K COUNTS PROGRAMS

On October 11, Smart Start-Centre County hosted the "Red Carpet Ribbon Cutting Event" to honor three local programs awarded newly established Pre-K Counts grants as part of the Governor's current budget. The budget included investments in three state initiatives: Child Care Works, Keystone STARS and Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts. These three initiatives help to insure increased quality early childhood care and education and increase the availability of quality pre-kindergarten to children and families with various abilities to access such programs.

In Centre County, 10 Pre-K programs began operating this fall, creating 140 full-time and part-time opportunities for children 3-5 years of age. Agencies that are administering the grants on behalf of the programs include the Child Development & Family Council, Cen-Clear Child Services and the Pennsylvania State University. Programs are located throughout Centre County with locations in Philipsburg, Wingate, Bellefonte, State College and Port Matilda. They also include partnerships with the Bald Eagle, Bellefonte and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts.

The Red Carpet Ribbon Cutting Event began with a ribbon cutting ceremony at

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Mattenville (top l-r): Melissa David, Pre-K teacher; Gene Kephart, Exec. Dir., Cen-Clear; Dan Fisher, Bald Eagle SD Supt.; Harriet Dichter, Deputy Sec.; Kerry Benninghoff, State Representative; and Heather Evert, Pre-K teacher.

Bennett (middle l-r): Wendy Whitesell, Bennett Center Director; Harriet Dichter; John LaRose, Central Reg. Key Dir.

Discovery (bottom l-r): John LaRose, Harriet Dichter, and Paula Thombloom, Pre-K Admin.

Executive Director continued . . .

Start-Centre County action committees have recently updated their activities with ambitious **goals for the 2007-2008 fiscal year**. One achievement is the new look and content for **our website at www.smartstartcc.org**. Please visit the site to see new features such as Committee Goals, the Health and Nutrition Committee's "Centre County Health and Nutrition Resources," the Early Care and Education Committee's "Transition to Kindergarten in the School Districts," and upcoming events on the "Smart Start Calendar." As we continue to develop our website, we welcome your suggestions.

Our Board membership has recently grown to include four new members. We are proud to welcome **Robert Sunday**, officer at Kish Bank; **Dr. Robin Oliver**, with Centre Medical and Surgical Associates; **Joseph Webber**, financial advisor at Merrill Lynch; and **Anthony D'Augelli**, Associate Dean of Health and Human Development at Penn State.

Also new at Smart Start-Centre County is Administrative Assistant, **Emily Salerno**. In addition to working part-time with Smart Start, Emily is pursuing graduate studies in Elementary Education Counseling at Penn State. We are also fortunate to have three Penn State seniors as interns this semester. **Jeffrey Clippinger**, who started this summer and is majoring in accounting, is assisting with our administration as we transition to our new status as an independent non-profit organization and a Centre County United Way collaborative.

Brittany Spencer, majoring in journalism, and **Katie Cuppett**, majoring in advertising and public relations, are assisting with public events and publications.

As always, I appreciate your support for where success starts—the early years!

Eileen Wise

**RED CARPET TOUR cont'd . . .**

Matternville Preschool in Port Matilda. Deputy Secretary of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, Harriet Dichter, did the honor of cutting the ribbon to launch the opening of the center for the Pre-K counts program. The tour continued with ribbon cuttings at Discovery Child Development Center and the Bennett Family Center. Following the tour, an awards luncheon was held at the statewide PACCA conference at the Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel where more than 600 early education practitioners were in attendance. PACCA, the Pennsylvania Child Care Association, is a non-profit organization dedicated to facilitating the provision of quality early care and education to the children of Pennsylvania. Legislators who supported the Governor's Early Childhood Initiatives for the 2007-2008 budget were honored at the luncheon, including Senators Jake Corman and John Wozniak and State Representatives Scott Conklin and Mike Hanna. Also honored at the event was Harriet Dichter for all her hard work and dedication to Early Childhood Education and the Pennsylvania United Way Director Tony Ross for engaging the business community to support such programs.

Investing in early childhood education is so critical because children who attend high quality pre-kindergarten do better in school and are less likely to repeat a grade. These children are also more likely to graduate from high school and attend college while becoming more productive citizens with higher earnings.

A MOMENT WITH SECRETARY DICHTER

by Brittany Spencer

As the Secretary of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, Harriet Dichter has the job of linking the Departments of Education and Public Welfare to strengthen early education for all children in Pennsylvania. Applying three new programs, Child Care Works, Keystone STARS and Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, has been one of her main objectives and she took time to come to Centre County for Smart Start's Red Carpet Ribbon Cutting Event to see how these new programs were being implemented. She also took a few moments to speak with intern Brittany Spencer about her plans.

How far along are you in your goals for Early Childhood Education in Pennsylvania?

- Ø We have made some good progress, but we still have far to go. If we look at our population of preschool children statewide, we see that about 30% of them can participate in a good quality early learning program. We know that all children benefit from these programs, so this means we have a ways to go to provide sufficient access to early education for young children. But I am pleased that we have made good progress in starting new programs such as PA Pre-K Counts, and in strengthening programs such as Keystone STARS and Child Care Works. We have also introduced important work in accountability, standards, community engagement, outreach, and in the professional preparation for teachers and administrators.

What do you think the next step is?

- Ø We need leadership at all levels to continue this work. This means that we need local business and civic leaders to understand the value-added of this work and to make sure that they are communicating this to the elected officials who make such a difference in helping to fund these programs. Along with business and civic leaders, there are leadership opportunities for parents as well as for the professionals who direct and staff early childhood

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WHAT'S HAPPENING?

JANUARY

26 — Early Years Are Learning Years: Professional Development Conference for Early Childhood Educators, full day conference at the Penn Stater. Contact Beth Van Horn for more information at 814-355-4897.

FEBRUARY

9 — Pre-Kindergarten Round- Up Event: Held at the Nittany Mall in front of JCPenney, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Information on the transition to kindergarten for parents and families. Contact Smart Start-Centre County at 814-238-0331.

23 — Focus On Strong Families Conference: "Media Literacy," at Mt. Nittany Middle School, sponsored by State College School District. Open to all families. The conference will include activities for children and workshops for the parents. Break refreshments and lunch, \$15/person or \$25/couple and \$8 for children. 8:30 a.m. - 4:15 p.m., contact Dr. Donna Ricketts at 814-231-1062 for more information.



Brittany and Secretary Dichter

programs. For those who work in early education, their next step is to keep focusing on quality in their program implementation and to take the time to reach out and educate others about the important value of the work and to also create partnerships with the broader community.

What do you think is needed to keep young people interested in the education field, considering it is not a highly paid field?

- ∅ Compensation is not the only motivator for people to enter a field and to stay there. We know that those who enter early childhood are committed to it and are also very sensitive to children. We do need to continue to professionalize early childhood so that people who do it understand how much education it takes to do well and for the broader community to help value the work.

What do you think about the new early childhood degrees that are being instituted in Pennsylvania?

- ∅ We are excited about the early childhood degrees, and are guiding the work in the Department of Education of establishing the standards for higher education to use while preparing new teachers. The new teacher certification guidelines, which will give us a pre-k to 4th grade certificate, recognize the importance of young children's development and allow a greater focus on subject matter expertise in conjunction with child development knowledge and of course a practical understanding about how to teach young children and work well with their families. This new teacher certificate is a great opportunity for Pennsylvania, and a great way for all of us to help all teachers be able to succeed with all children.

What will you and the Governor be working on in the future?

- ∅ This fall we are working very hard with the communities all around the state who are implementing PA Pre-K Counts and expanding Keystone STARS and Child Care Works. It is very exciting to see so much community involvement in early childhood right now.

SPEAKER SERIES 2007 RECAP

This year, the Early Childhood Mental Health committee presented its 2007 Speaker Series on "Emotion Coaching" with three distinguished speakers who brought information and interventions to share with Centre County.

This year's series focused on the mental health of children from birth to six years old, encompassing all the developmental levels of early childhood. There were approximately 155 attendees at the three workshops and those who attended represented several different disciplines including child care providers, mental health professionals, social service professionals, educators, graduate students and parents. These individuals directly impact almost 1400 children and indirectly impact over 22,000 children.

The three speakers included in this year's Early Childhood Mental Health series were Dr. Sophie Havighurst, Dr. Robert Marvin, Dr. Scott Gest and Julia Gest, M.Ed.

At the May 24 workshop **Dr. Sophie Havighurst**, a researcher and clinical psychologist at Mindful: a centre for Training and Research in Developmental Health at the University of Melbourne, presented a workshop on "Tuning in to Kids: Emotionally Intelligent Parenting". She discussed the background of emotional competence and emotion regulation as well as the intervention for parents and professionals of "Tuning in to Kids". This intervention was delivered through role playing of the six steps of the program: notice the emotion, clarify with a question, reflect the emotion, locate the emotion in the body, empathize, and explore. Those who attended thought the workshop was beneficial



Sophie Havighurst

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SPEAKER SERIES RECAP cont'd . . .

including one participant who said, "This was a terrific workshop! Thank you for extending invitations to the community and for making it so affordable."



Robert Marvin

The "Circle of Security – Promoting Secure Child-Parent Relations in Early Childhood" was presented by **Dr. Robert Marvin**, Director of the Mary D.

Ainsworth Child-Parent Attachment Clinic and professor of psychology at The University of Virginia. On Wednesday, September 19 Dr. Marvin explained the theory of attachment, the different patterns of attachment, and how attachment relates to emotion regulation in children. He also discussed the "Circle of Security" intervention that is used in working with

parents and children through video clips of the intervention. The techniques in the "Circle of Security" include: assessing attachment pattern, establish a holding environment for the parent, provide parent with map of secure parent-child interaction, increase parents' observational skills and reflective functioning, and facilitate an empathetic shift. "It was a wonderful experience with great information on attachment theory and interventions that can be helpful in successful parenting," said one attendee.

Dr. Scott Gest and Julia Gest, M.Ed. presented their workshop "Effects of Language Development on Emotional Regulation in Young Children" on Saturday, September 29. Dr. Scott Gest is part of the Human Development and Family Studies Department at Penn State University and is currently researching peer dynamics in elementary and middle school children and also developing and assessing the Head Start REDI intervention project.

Julia Gest is program developer and researcher in the area of early literacy learning and social emotional learning. These two presenters discussed the link between emotional regulation and language development in young children. One participant said, "It was a wonderful opportunity to revisit topics that are familiar and learn new strategies for professional growth." They used several interactive, language coaching techniques to teach attendees strategies in helping children develop language about emotions, so that children can understand and communicate their emotions effectively.



Julia & Scott Gest