



WORD

Family Resource Centers

A Program of WORD-Women's Opportunity and Resource Development

Newsletter

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For more information go to:
www.wordinc.org/frc

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Tot Time with Flair

"Dos. Dos," repeated Noemi Santos patiently, as she went through the numbers 1-10 in Spanish. "Dos. Dos," eagerly parroted the fifteen or so pre-schoolers, "Dos".

And so it was that these toddlers and their mothers happily and cheerfully learned to speak Spanish. Santos' visit to the Florence Family Resource Center Tot Time on a cold snowy morning in December was part of Family Resource Center

Coordinator Vanessa Ward's plan to bring the community to the school. "We want to get the community involved," she explained, "to promote community involvement, so that the kids feel like a part of the community. If they feel that sense of community now, they will feel like participating and becoming a part of the community later on."

Marie Zeiler, "Grandma Zeiler" as she tells the kids to call her, is a very familiar face in the community. As a resident of Florence for over 45 years, and with children and grandchildren in the valley, Marie was a natural when Vanessa needed someone to tell stories and lead the Tot Time activity of making "Potpourri Pies" that morning.



"It's the people that make the difference," said Ward. "It's your relationship with people and with the community that helps you get things done, but mostly to bring people together."

To bring people together. "I want them to feel that it is their Resource Center," explained Ward, "and that they are running it. That it is their Center, not Vanessa's. I am just here to oversee it. I keep a sheet on my desk when I am not here, so that when people come in, they can pick something off the list to do, do it, and then put it in the 'Finished Box'. It is so important to build community.

And sometimes it's good to take the kids out into the community, but sometimes it's better to bring the community to the kids. We have such a wealth of talent in our community." She tapped into that wealth of talent when she recruited parent Ronda Smith to coordinate the Center's bi-monthly Tot Times. "But I want to expand Tot Time to every Wednesday!" she enthused. "There is a huge need for such events in Florence. Our society is

gravitating to a stay-at-home mentality and it is important to...

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Family Resource Centers, a program of WORD, are a collaborative program between WORD and school districts and are funded by:
-Montana Office of Community Service
-The Engelhard Foundation
-Title I
-Early Learning Opportunities
-Washington Foundation

Trainer's Toolbox Part II

It's all about people. People working with people. People teaching, leading, guiding, developing leadership in each other. "You might have excellent computer skills," says Brook Clark, Literacy Support Corps Program Coordinator "but it's even more important for us build skills around bringing people together."

And so they did. The Western Montana Literary Support Corps volunteers joined two other AmeriCorps teams for a two-day training on the UM campus October 15th and 16th. The workshop, led by Shannon Stober, Training Specialist with the state Office of Community Service, focused on developing those people skills.

Each state is required to have an office that oversees AmeriCorps projects, administers grants, and provides support, including training. "The Facilitation Toolbox workshop," said Stober "is a specific training that has been used in the state for several years. While local agencies can provide hard skills, such as time management, etc. this workshop builds leadership development skills." People skills.

Under Stober's guidance and that of national training specialist Nicole Trimble, who developed the curriculum, participants learned about people: individual learning styles, how to "teach" adults, how to facilitate small group meetings and how to guide people through a project, toward a goal. Not an easy task, but at the heart of the work of FRC, to bring people together to get something done.

It involves creating a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere where all feel included and free to contribute. It means helping a group brainstorm and plan projects, building consensus when making decisions, problem-solving when difficulties arise, resolving conflicts when necessary, and helping others give and receive feedback.

Through small group activities, each person had an opportunity to practice being a facilitator, with very critical feedback from the others. "The intensity of the training," said Clark, "stemmed from giving and receiving feedback from a group of peers."

But it works. "The trainers kept saying how important it was to...(Continued on Page 4)

Tot Time Continued...

get out and interact with others, with our neighbors. To get together with other families, creating friendships." So Smith wants to see a Tot Time happen every Wednesday, with many more parents involved in the planning, bringing treats, reading stories, and teaching the enrichment activities. She plans on bringing the school Resource Officer and the local firemen to the story times, taking the kids on a field trip to the post office and to the local grocery store that has been so generous in their contributions to the program. "The local IGA store has been great," said Ward. "Every time I go in there, the owner asks if there isn't something else I need. They have donated food, drinks, paper plates, all the stuff for we need for Tot Time activities. They are wonderful. It really takes a village, truly."



Brook Clark and Lindsey Rehder accept a check on behalf of WORD-Family Resource Centers from the Target Corporation. A grant was written to Target to help support the Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) program. Thank you Target for your support!!

Great Minds...All In One Room!

It might have been called a meeting of the great minds, for surely there was a lot of great thinking going on. But in truth, Einstein wasn't present, although he probably would have relished the opportunity to join in the conversation. It was, however, a meeting of some of western Montana's great minds and educational leaders, all focused on one important topic: making a difference in the lives of the children and connecting with their families.

Jeanne Moon, Director of the Western Montana Literacy Support Corps, convened the Family Resource Centers Advisory Council for the first of its three working lunches on Thursday, December 1st at Jaker's Grill in Missoula. The council is to help Moon and her team, along with grant writer Barbara Riley, to craft a re-compete grant for AmeriCorps funds that support the thriving Family Resource Centers in western Montana. This group will help to shape the future of the Family Resource Centers.

As Moon explained, the Family Resource Centers AmeriCorps grant is presently in year two of a three-year grant cycle. In 2006, WORD will be writing a re-compete grant to allow the program to continue collaborating with schools and communities throughout western Montana.

The council began its work by identifying the strengths of the Centers, with many of the superintendents, principals, teachers and parents on the council agreeing that the Centers were making a difference in building communication and bridges between the families, the community, and the schools. The council noted that through events and activities such as:

- Family Fun Nights, Tot Times, Literacy Lunches
 - Parent education workshops
 - Family Resource Center newsletter and
 - Offering a variety of volunteer opportunities for parents and community members
 - Creating a comfortable place in the schools to welcome parents
 - Sponsoring activities for parents to meet other parents
- Family Resource Centers have:
- Increased communication between the school and the community
 - Expanded volunteer opportunities in the schools
 - Engaged the community in the schools

The Council then turned to some of the needs they would like to see the Centers address:

- Develop a rural model of a Family Resource Center
- Develop Family Resource Center Coordinator training tailored to meet specific needs
- Bring more community agencies and programs into the schools
- Better coordinate school events and activities within a school

In looking to the future, the members suggested that the program might:

- Expand to new locations
- Increase Coordinator service
- Bring state services into the schools
- Welcome home and private school students into the schools
- Bring greater focus to early childhood education and the transitioning of children into school
- Develop middle and high school programs



For grant writer Barbara Riley, the convening of an advisory council is essential to writing a good grant. "It is necessary for all those involved with and affected by the work to have input." Having written the original grant in 1995, she was delighted at how the Family Resource Centers have become such an integral part of the school and how well the work of the Centers fits with the priorities of the AmeriCorps program: leadership development of its members, volunteer development, and community building. "That is," she said, "because the AmeriCorps volunteers are doing it. They are becoming these wonderful leaders who then go on to do a lot more in their schools and their communities. And most importantly, they bring the community and parents

in as volunteers."

For Michael Williams, Superintendent of Lone Rock School District in Ravalli County, there is no question that the Centers are integral to his school. "The fact that there is another set of people working on PR, on building communication between the families and the school, is HUGE. Although we as administrators and teachers wanted to get it done, it just didn't, couldn't happen. Teachers are too busy."

There are only a couple of things he thinks need to be addressed. One is the increase in importance of the Education Award. "The Ed Award is a big incentive," he noted, "and needs to be emphasized more to help recruit volunteers." The other is to increase the length of service of Family Resource Center Coordinators to two years. "It is so important for consistency," he said. "It just takes a lot of time to get things up and running and established. It would be great to have an opportunity to build on past successes and make them even better."

Locations of the Family Resource Centers:

Missoula Area:

Bonner School
PO Box 1004
Bonner, MT 59823
Anya Miles
406-258-6151

Franklin Elementary
1901 S. 10th West
Missoula, MT 59802
Alicia Crandell
406-327-0483
franklinfrc@mcps.k12.mt.us

Hawthorne Elementary
2835 S. 3rd West
Missoula, MT 59804
Carrie Strike
406-327-6945
hawthornefrc@mcps.k12.mt.us

Lewis and Clark Elementary
2901 Park St.
Missoula, MT 59801
Erin Kral
406-327-6946
frclewis@mcps.k12.mt.us

Lowell Elementary
1200 Sherwood
Missoula, MT 59802
Josh Archey
406-327-0390
lowellfrc@mcps.k12.mt.us

Paxson Elementary
101 Evans
Missoula, MT 59801
Liz Stotts
406-542-4055
frcpaxson@mcps.k12.mt.us

Rattlesnake Elementary
1220 Pineview
Missoula, MT
Jane Yungmeyer-Olson
406-542-4914
resfrc@mcps.k12.mt.us

Russell Elementary
3216 Russell St.
Missoula, MT 59801
Jillian Foster
406-728-2400 ext 4846
frcrussell@mcps.k12.mt.us

Teen Family Resource Center
1861 S. 12th St
Missoula, MT 59802
406-542-4900

Bitterroot Area:

Daly/Grantsdale Elementary
778 Grantsdale St.
Hamilton, MT 59840
Rachel Martin
406-363-2122 ext 190
406-363-1889
martinr@hsd3.org

Florence Elementary
5602 Old Hwy 93
Florence, MT 59833
Vanessa Ward
406-273-6741 ext 203
elemfrc@florence.k12.mt.us

Florence Middle School
5602 Old Hwy 93
Florence, MT 59833
Christa Burns
406-273-6741 ext 203
burnsc@florence.k12.mt.us

Hamilton Middle School
209 S. 5th St
Hamilton, MT 59840
Cathy Orr
406-363-2121 ext 5004
orrc@hsd3.org

Hamilton High School
327 Fairgrounds Rd
Hamilton, MT 59840
Ellen Ryter
406-375-6060 ext 6222
rytere@hsd3.org

Lone Rock Elementary
1112 Three Mile Creek Rd
Stevensville, MT 59870
Erica Amt
406-777-3314 ext 219
ericamt@lonerockschool.org

Ravalli Head Start
81 Kurtz Lane
Hamilton, MT 59840
Cami Ewalt
Susan Matthews
406-363-1217 ext 20
camrae@ravalliheadstart.org
susanm@ravalliheadstart.org

Kids First
Westview Center
103 S. 9th St. #105
Hamilton, MT 59840
Jodi Waliser
406-375-9588
jwaliser@bitterrootkids.org

Stevensville Elementary
300 Park Ave
Stevensville, MT 59870
Debbie Bauer-Johnson
406-777-5613 ext 351
johnsond@stevensville.k12.mt.us

Stevensville Junior High
300 Park Street
Stevensville, MT 59870
Debbie Bauer-Johnson
406-777-5533
johnsond@stevensville.k12.mt.us

Washington Primary
225 N. 5th St.
Hamilton, MT 59840
Michelle Wilson
406-363-2144

Victor School
425 4th Avenue
Victor, MT 59875
406-642-3221 ext 255

Flathead Area:

Cherry Valley Elementary
111 4th Ave
Polson, MT 59860
Tara Bowman
Liana Zimmerman
406-883-6333 ext 525
lzimmerman@polson.k12.mt.us

Linderman Elementary
111 4th Ave
Polson, MT 59860
Cassie Anderson
406-883-6229

Two Eagle River School
PO Box 160
Pablo, MT 59855
Dacia Whitworth
406-675-0292

Trainer's Toolbox Continued...

relate it to everyday life experiences, to fit these skills into everyday life, whether it is a conversation with a friend or a conflict with a co-worker," said Russell Family Resource Center Coordinator Jillian Foster, "and it works! Two other AmeriCorps volunteers and I actually used the DIGA process after a Literacy Lunch. We talked through how it went, taking turns describing the positive things that happened and what I could change for next time. I got really excited, it helped me think through the process."

For Stober, the goal is to develop leaders like Foster and Clark, leaders who will model the process and in turn, teach others to become leaders in their community. "We are seeking to build leaders of the process, not a leader of the initiative," explained Stober. "It is not their job to be the leader in the community, but to transfer these skills to community leaders, creating ownership on the part of the community members, leading by example and showing the process can work." That builds sustainability in programs and sustainable communities, where the good work of bringing people together continues."

To find out
more about the
Family
Resource
Centers visit
www.wordinc.org/frc
or call
406-543-3550