



WORD

# Family Resource Centers

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

## Newsletter

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1

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### What's Inside

- History of the Family Resource Centers
- Literacy Lunch at Bonner
- Get to know your Center Coordinators
- Listing of all Family Resource Centers in western Montana

Locations of Family Resource Centers

#### Missoula Area:

Bonner  
Franklin  
Hawthorne  
Lewis and Clark  
Lowell  
Rattlesnake  
Russell  
Teen Family Resource Center

#### Bitterroot Area:

Daly/Grantsdale  
Darby  
Florence  
Hamilton-Kids First  
Lone Rock  
Ravalli Head Start  
Stevensville  
Washington

#### Flathead Area:

Cherry Valley  
Ronan

## Family Fun Night at Lowell School

"My friends," declared Jasper Vanspoore, "that's the best part. It's fun to be here with my friends." That seemed to be the overwhelming opinion shared by many of the fair goers. "It's community," noted her mother, Rae Vanspoore. (See picture inset.) "It's so great to have the Lowell School families and neighbors together at one event."

It was the Lowell School Family Resource Center that brought Lowell School families and friends together for the school's annual Fall Frolic, held Friday, September 24<sup>th</sup> in the school gym. Co-sponsored by the FRC, WORD and MCPS, Lowell School parents and students prepared and served a homemade spaghetti dinner, helped families make scarecrows and youngsters play games that helped develop their motor and creative thinking skills.

Not only friends, but the opportunity to make her own scarecrow brought Auva Speiser, a fourth grader at Lowell, to the school gym. "I love making my own scarecrow," she said.

"Last year we couldn't come and I was bummed because everybody else had a scarecrow at their



house, but us." Her mother, Autumn Speiser, agreed, "We were not going to miss it this year, the kids wouldn't let us! The best part of the evening for her? "Community. I love this school. It is so community-based. It has something going on for kids and families all the time."

The Lowell community did show up and Kasey Savage, the AmeriCorps Family Resource Center Coordinator was thrilled with the turnout and response. "It

was great to see all the families have fun together. And we saw a lot of new faces, a lot of new families." She said that one of the goals of Family Resource Centers is to help families play together, to show parents ways to play with their children and to teach families ways to have "constructive play." These are games and activities that are not competitive but are designed to help the child develop physically and allow the child to be creative and imaginative.

"It was a great night for all," says Savage, "and taught parents simple games and activities that they can do at home, helping with their child's development and education. That's why we are here."



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

# Meet Your Family Resource Center Family

(Part one in a ten-part series on Family Resource Center staff)



Jane Yungmeyer Olson, FRC Coordinator at Rattlesnake School, has two very good reasons to

hang out at school. Her daughters Iris and Sonia, are fourth and first-graders, respectively, at Rattlesnake School. Already familiar with the families and staff at the school as a very active parent and volunteer, she was a natural when the position of being an AmeriCorps member through the Western Montana Literacy Support Corps came up as a Family Resource Center Coordinator "Busy," she laughs, "but I love being at school with my daughters." Besides staffing the FRC twenty five

hours a week, Olson directs the group fitness program at a local fitness club and teaches aerobic classes, all the while juggling the role of full-time wife and mother.

Olson is a scientist by training. She worked as a soil and water conservationist in Wyoming before quitting to become a stay-at-home mom and raise her two daughters. "That's when I began to teach aerobics, it was the perfect job while raising kids."

The family moved to Missoula three years ago when her husband Jim was transferred with the U.S. Forest Service. (He develops equipment for smoke jumpers.) "I love it here," she says, "Missoula is a great place."

It's understandable, then, to see why connecting new families to their community and to their school is an important goal for Olson. She feels that it is important that the schools provide a place that welcomes parents and where parents can get to know one another.

Literacy lunches, toddler story times, and the ever popular "Main Man" and "Main Woman" breakfasts are all planned to do just that: to bring families together to meet one another and to be connected to school. And another special event that has to do with the Rattlesnake and bears. Hmmm. Wonder what that could be? Stay tuned.



Left: A family takes time for a picture while stopping by the Family Resource Center at Russell School

Right: Apple Cider making at Lewis and Clark's Family Fun Night



## *A Note from the Director- Jeanne Moon*

Over the last ten school years, we here at Women's Opportunity and Resource Development (WORD) have worked to help establish Family Resource Centers in schools. This much we know is true, schools are asked to do more and more each year. Simply teaching the three "R's" does not meet community expectations of providing "good education". At the same time families are also asked to do more and more. Simply sending a child off expecting the school to take care

of all teaching also does not meet community expectations. So whose job is it to insure children get a "good education"? At risk of sounding trite, it really does "take a village".

As our knowledge grows of how children learn, so do our expectations, hopes and dreams for the children that both families and educators call "our kids". Our kids don't live compartmentalized lives. Their home life flows into school and school life flows right back home with them.

Research now confirms what common sense has always known. Our kids are continually learning, whether they are at home, in the community or in a classroom. What are we teaching them?

More than a space or a room in a school, Family Resource Centers bring adults together in vibrant, caring relationships that teach our children the importance of learning throughout life. I hope I meet you there.

-Jeanne Moon  
Program Director

# Family Resource Centers-Vital to our Schools

“It’s about kids and families and connecting families and schools,” explains Mike Maxwell, Franklin School principal and long-time supporter of the Family Resource Centers in Missoula schools. “When we first started the center we felt that it was essential to bring parents into the school and that it was very important to not only have a person dedicated to making that connection, but a space in the school for parents to go. Studies have shown, that when parents are simply in the school building, children do better,” says Maxwell.

Following on the success of the Family Resource Center at Roosevelt School, in March of 1995 Maxwell created such a place in his school and hired parent and long-time PTA volunteer, Sue Black to staff the center.

“It was pretty sketchy at first,” laughs Black, as she recalls the

mere seven hours a week she was hired to bring the school and community together and the sharing the music teacher’s classroom.

Laura Pickett, instrumental in establishing the very successful FRC at Lowell School, believes that the centers play a crucial role in bringing the community, the family, and the schools together in the education of children. “The FRC is the hub of the triangle, the link between the three entities, all necessary components for the success of the child.”

Today the centers have their own rooms in the schools and are open, and staffed for the most part, the same hours as the school day. Centers can be found in most Missoula elementary schools and in schools from Polson to Darby.

The centers now provide a wide range of services focusing not only on bringing the school and family together, but on developing literacy and physical and motor skills of the

students and the parenting skills of the parents. The centers sponsor the national Walk to School Day; host student/parent book clubs, toddler story times, and literacy lunches; maintain closets of clothes and provide meals for families and Christmas baskets with food and gifts; hold monthly family fun nights with food and games; help with student savings accounts; offer craft classes; provide parenting books and classes; and help bring parent volunteers into the classrooms. But most important, notes Black, is to help parents feel welcome and a part of the school community.

Each center is unique and different, reflecting the needs and profile of the student population, but all are integral to the success of the school and serve a vital function in creating that bond between the school and the home. “I am an absolute zealot,” declares, Maxwell. “The FRC’s are a tremendous resource which facilitate cooperation, collaboration, and community. The schools can’t do it alone.”

## Bonner School Literacy Lunch

The grin on Tanner Talbert’ face just got wider as he spotted his dad, Matt, seated at a table in the Family Resource Center. His dad’s smile matched his, both father and son delighted to be there, sharing a literacy lunch hosted by Bonner School FRC.

Literacy lunches are happening all over Missoula and local area schools this year, thanks to an exciting collaboration between the classroom teacher, the school, and the school’s FRC. Once a month, sometimes once a week in many schools, the center turns into a lunchroom as a class invites its families to share lunch and a reading or writing activity.

Today, it was Mrs. Hall’s third-grade class that got to invite their parents and brothers and sisters to the event. Sara Boyett, Family Resource Coordinator AmeriCorps member, was delighted with the turnout as more than 15 of the 19 students in the class had parents come to have lunch with them.

After lunch, students and parents huddled over large, colorful sheets of construction paper, scribbling out a poem with markers. Their job was to create an “acrostic” poem, one that uses the letters in their names

as the first letter of a word describing themselves on each line of the poem. “Dad, What would be a good word for i?” asked Destiny, stumped over a good word to describe herself. “Oh, I think ‘interesting things’ might be a good word to describe you. What do you think?” answered her father, Dean Baker. Destiny beamed her response, quickly writing the word on her poem with her dad’s help with the spelling.

“It is definitely a highlight for the kids,” said teacher Mrs. Hall. “The kids are thrilled that their parents take the time out of their busy lives to come eat with them. This is a wonderful way to get parents in the schools. That is so important.”



# *Locations of the Family Resource Centers:*

## **Missoula Area:**

Bonner School  
PO Box 1004  
Bonner, MT 59823  
Sara Boyett  
406-258-6151  
family@bonner.k12.mt.us

Franklin Elementary  
1901 S. 10th West  
Missoula, MT 59802  
Vickie Rectenwald  
406-327-0483

Hawthorne Elementary  
2835 S. 3rd West  
Missoula, MT 59804  
Mandy Hansen  
406-327-6945

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

Lowell Elementary  
1200 Sherwood  
Missoula, MT 59802  
Kasey Savage  
406-327-0390  
lowellfrfc@mcps.k12.mt.us

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

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

Teen Family Resource Center  
1861 S. 12th St  
Missoula, MT 59802  
Essie Etchingham

## **Bitterroot Area:**

Daly/Grantsdale Elementary  
778 Grantsdale St.  
Hamilton, MT 59840  
Rachel Martin  
406-363-2122 ext 202

Darby Elementary  
209 School Drive  
Darby, MT 59829  
Kelly Morris  
406-821-3643

Florence Elementary  
5602 Old Hwy 93  
Florence, MT 59833  
Elaine Copeland  
406-273-6747 ext 117  
copelande@florence.k12.mt.us

Florence Middle School  
5602 Old Hwy 93  
Florence, MT 59833  
Christa Burns  
406-273-0587

Lone Rock Elementary  
1112 Three Mile Creek Rd  
Stevensville, MT 59870  
Nancy Preston  
406-777-3314  
npreston@lonerockschool.ed

Ravalli Head Start  
81 Kurtz Lane  
Hamilton, MT 59840  
Paula Wood  
406-363-1217 ext 21

Kids First  
Westview Center  
103 S. 9th St. #105  
Hamilton, MT 59840  
Vicki Rivera  
406-375-9588

Stevensville Elementary  
300 Park Ave  
Stevensville, MT 59870  
Wanda Stordahl  
406-777-5613 ext 351

Washington Elementary  
225 N. 5th St.  
Hamilton, MT 59840  
Tara Gallagher  
406-363-2144

## **Flathead Area:**

Cherry Valley Elementary  
111 4th Ave  
Polson, MT 59860  
Stephanie Noyes  
snoyes@polson.k12.mt.us  
Edna Lemm  
406-883-6333

Ronan Middle School  
421 Andrews NW  
Drawer R  
Ronan, MT 59864  
Kathy Benedetti  
406-676-3390  
kathy.benedetti@ronank12.edu

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