



WORD

Family Resource Centers

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

Newsletter

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For more information go to:
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Fun as a Family

The sound of drumming and singing filled the Rattlesnake School gym inviting all to dance in the traditional welcoming dance, The Round Dance. "It is a friendship dance," explained MCPS Indian Educator Kathy Sharbono, "to invite all to come together in friendship, in a circle." As the dancers passed one another other in the circle, shaking hands and smiling it was clear that friendship was being shared.



Family Resource Center Coordinator, Jane Olson, collaborated with Sharbono, of the Missoula Indian Center and Project Success, to create a special Family Fun Night on Thursday, September 29th to kick off Family Fun Nights at Rattlesnake School. They also organized the evening to celebrate American Heritage Day.

The music, provided by a group of Missoula high school drummers and their friends, brought Rattlesnake kindergartener Daniel Justice Darling to the round dance with his mom, Beth. "We like pow wows and the drumming, it is so spiritual. But this is the first time that I have gotten him to dance," she explained. He agreed, "I like pow wows, I like the music. It's fun to have it at school."

Fry bread was the highlight of the potluck meal, native stories were read by Indian Club students in the Story Corner, and dream catchers were made. At another table, Liz Doney, a student at the Salish Kootenai College in education

and mother of one of the drummers, demonstrated the intricate art of native beadwork, weaving the tiny beads into colorful stars, suns, and circles. For Doney, the making of her exquisite beaded purses and belts is a part of herself. "It is hard work and when the young start out, they often become frustrated and want to quit. I tell them that when you make something it becomes a part of your life and when you give it, or even sell it to someone else, you are giving a part of yourself. Don't hate it, because it's you. After they understand that, they have more patience."

"What a great way to start the year," mused a tired but delighted Gail Becker, Rattlesnake School Principal, at the end of the evening. And so it was. The 150 or so students, parents, staff and community members who came together to dance, to share a meal, and to share themselves in art, stories, and music, seemed to be in agreement.



In a town with a history and culture of wariness between the two cultures, it is more important than ever that we start to build community, a true community.

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

The Results Are In...

Well, one thing seems to be clear. Families like their school's Family Resource Center. Furthermore, they like a place in the school where they can meet other parents and learn about their community's activities and resources. They just want more: more communication, more activities, more opportunities to meet other parents, more ways to help their child succeed in school, and more ways to help out at school.

So was the conclusion of the AmeriCorps Program Participant Survey of Family Resource Centers conducted last spring. The survey was mailed to 170 parents in the area who had participated in five or more learning activities through the Family Resource Centers. 106 surveys were returned, a remarkable return rate for surveys.

Of those responding, 93.4% agreed that Family Resource Centers increased their awareness of school and or/community and more importantly, 80.6% stated that the Family Resource Centers increased their participation in the school or community. And because of Family Resource Centers activities, 85% agreed that they now know more ways to encourage their child's learning at home.

Perhaps the most significant impact the centers have had on families, particularly in the rural areas, has been the opportunity to meet other parents. 93.4% stated that they have been able to meet and connect with

other parents. "Connect", "forming friendships", "meeting other parents", "getting together" were many of the comments repeated over and over on the surveys. The surveys showed that the parents liked a place in the school where they felt welcomed and were given specific ways to help.

These survey results were compiled by Steffen Saifer, at the Northwest Regional Educational Research Laboratory. "Comments were overwhelmingly positive," concludes the report, "and most called for more of the great activities and services provided by Family Resource Centers".

Jeanne Moon, Program Director, was pleased with the results. AmeriCorps has a strong parent and community development component to its mission, she noted. The survey seems to indicate that the program is achieving that goal. "It shows us what we have been good at, and gives us some direction, too, as to where we can go," she said. Parents seem to want a better understanding of their child's developmental needs at a certain age, and they want specific skills in helping with their child's development."

For most parents, they just want more: more communication, more activities, more opportunities to meet other parents, to learn more about helping their child succeed in school, and more ways to help out at school. Looks like we've got our work cut out for us.

A Note from the Director

This fall the Western Montana Literacy Support Corps begins its fourth year developing Family Resource Centers in schools and community agencies. WORD has been engaged in this work for the last thirteen years, this work of networking adults who care about children, families and learning together in supportive working relationships. And still we are learning how to do it. **'Still learning'** is the excitement that keeps us interested in the work. WORD is a learning organization. We began, not with a grant, but with a vision and an enthusiasm for learning new ways of doing things. We continue to thrive because of our desire to apply innovative solutions to perplexing issues.

Traditionally learning has been based on an educational paradigm that has been around since the turn of the century; a tradition where students sit and receive their training from a skilled teacher. The challenges we face in our world today are very different from the ones of 100 years ago. Passive learning no longer prepares our children, or us, for the challenges of today and tomorrow. We must adapt, react well to change, and think independently. **In today's world, the process of learning is as important as the result.** We err when we place the task of teaching solely on subject experts--an impossible task in this age of so much information. Instead, we need dedicated people to oversee the learning process. Context is critical to learning. Children and adults learn best by doing, and while doing, we need the opportunity to learn from our failures. Measuring learning effectively requires the right assessment tools. Learning should be fun!

It goes without saying, that the best way to teach is by example. We need to place our emphasis on teamwork, partnerships that recognize the value of each member. It takes us all - WORD, superintendents, principals, community agencies, AmeriCorps members, families, teachers, community members...it takes us all, working together as a team, to inspire in kids the love of learning. And so we begin another school year together. I am so happy to be a part of this team with all of you. I hope we learn our lessons well this year!

-Jeanne Moon, Program Director

Gearing Up For A New Year..

For Laurie Schneider, Lewis and Clark Family Resource Center Coordinator, working with her team to build their “hot” wheels (which actually “laid down rubber” out of smashed tootsie rolls) was a great lesson in making something out of nothing. “That was one of the most applicable lessons I learned, what wonderful things you can do with limited resources.” An important lesson indeed, for cash-strapped schools and Family Resource Centers.



The idea was for each team to build a vehicle from a mishmash of stuff, and then send it on to the other teams for them to improve on your design. The message in the lesson was quickly learned, many hands make light work and the result is usually a lot better when there are more minds and creativity involved, the team is better than the individual, with each team member contributing something unique and individual. And of course, you need to learn patience, getting along with others and working out conflicts, very important life’s lessons.

This lesson in cooperative construction was just one of the many team-building activities designed for the Literacy Support Corps Orientation held in late August. For two full days, team leaders and Family Resource Center Coordinators from Missoula, the Bitterroot and Polson, met to get to know one another and to start working together as a team.

For Bitterroot Team Leader, Nancy Preston, it was a great opportunity “to get to know each other. And how though everyone is different, with different personality traits, how we all are there for the same goal”. For Nancy working with her new team members, “It is exciting, they have all these new ideas and they are so excited at being in their own Centers.”

Besides learning the nuts and bolts of how to handle the mountain of paperwork that goes with the

job, participants heard Cris Mulvey, Executive Director of WORD, speak about WORD its mission of work for the community. “She was really down-to-earth,” said Schneider, “a risk-taker who is not afraid to get her hands dirty and to get in there and help people, to get things done. She’s really inspiring.”

Jeanne Moon, project director of Western Montana Literacy Support Corps, talked about the ins and outs of the AmeriCorps/WORD relationship, and Laura Pickett, training advisor from the program helped coordinators develop a first month plan with guidance about how to prepare letters to parents, plan open houses, and conduct parent surveys.

Melissa Parrott and Rachel Martin shared positive second-year stories which highlighted their years of service and provided hope and inspiration to the new members. Future trainings will be held throughout the year. The



next step is simply to give the teams a chance to get into their schools, build their centers and their successes from lessons learned at the orientation.

Lindsey Rehder, who helped organize the event, was pleased with the training. “It was great how everyone started to build team camaraderie. It’s a great way to start out the year. When everyone knows everyone and you can put a face to a name.”

Locations of the Family Resource Centers:

Missoula Area:

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

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

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

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

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

Paxson Elementary
101 Evans
Missoula, MT 59801
Cheryl Steenson-Schule
406-542-4055
frcpaxson@mcps.k12.mt.us

Rattlesnake Elementary
1220 Pineview
Missoula, MT
Jane Yungmeyer-Olson
406-542-4914
resfrfc@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
Wendy Gay
406-542-4900
wgay@wordinc.org

Bitterroot Area:

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

Florence Elementary
5602 Old Hwy 93
Florence, MT 59833
Vanessa Ward
406-273-6747 ext 117
elemfrfc@florence.k12.mt.us

Florence Middle School
5602 Old Hwy 93
Florence, MT 59833
Christa Burns
406-273-0587
burnsc@florence.k12.mt.us

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

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

Lone Rock Elementary
1112 Three Mile Creek Rd
Stevensville, MT 59870
Erica Amt
406-777-3314 ext 218
ericaamt@lonerockschool.org

Ravalli Head Start
81 Kurtz Lane
Hamilton, MT 59840
Cami Ewalt
Susan Matthews
406-363-1217 ext 20

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
Stacey Burdett
406-642-3221
burdett@victor.k12.mt.us

Flathead Area:

Cherry Valley Elementary
111 4th Ave
Polson, MT 59860
Tara Bowman
Liana Zimmerman
406-883-6333

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

WORD-Family Resource Centers

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Suite 307
Missoula, MT 59802
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