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For more info:

[www.wordinc.org/frc](http://www.wordinc.org/frc)

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-Montana Office of Community Service

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Newsletter by:  
Julie Stevens

## Movin' Up

Children starting kindergarten in the fall are about to make a **BIG** change. Their transition will include a new building, new teachers, different expectations, new rules, and new peers. Opportunities for new experiences and growth are exciting! Still, many children may feel uneasy. Will my teacher like me? Will I make new friends? Will I get lost? Likewise, parents may feel some anxiety. Is my child ready? Will my child fit in? Will this school meet my child's needs?

According to the National Head Start Association, “There is a great deal of information indicating that **a child's success in school can be linked, at least in part, to effective transition practices and activities.**” Leah Davies, M.Ed explained, “Since schools are charged with helping children become well-adjusted citizens, school personnel have an important role in assisting students' adaptation to change.”

In 2004 Montana's Early Learning Guidelines, created in partnership between the Montana Department of Public Health and human Services/Early Childhood Services Bureau and the Montana Early Childhood Project, was published. The guidelines reflect what children need to know, understand, and be able to do by the time they reach kindergarten. In the guiding principles of this document it reads, “School Readiness: All children have the right to expect that the public school system, specifically the kindergarten classrooms, will be prepared to meet their needs. The responsibility for school readiness rests with the school, not the child” (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1995). While the responsi-

bility may rest with the school, all parents and community members have a role to play in meeting this responsibility.

WORD assists families and schools in this important transitional time, through Awesome Beginnings for Children (ABCs), a kindergarten preparedness program created by WORD. This five-week series of interactive classes for parents and their incoming kinder is designed to increase the parent's knowledge of and comfort in the school. The goal is to strengthen parents' ability to support their child in learning and experience a smooth transition into public education.



Laura Pickett

“I want parents to understand how important they are in their child's learning,” explained Laura Pickett, ABC's trainer. Laura enjoys sharing creative no cost skill-building ideas that parents can use to prepare with their children

for kindergarten. She said, “**I love when parents discover how much their children learn through play.**” Parents who attended ABC's last year shared, “I really liked being able to talk with other parents and the ideas I got from the classes are so exciting,” and “I wish I would have had this knowledge when my older daughter started school.”

To learn more about kindergarten readiness activities, contact a Family Resource Center near you, or call Laura Pickett at WORD (406) 543-3550 ext 255 or email [lpickett@wordinc.org](mailto:lpickett@wordinc.org).

# An Amazing Year of Service



Above: Jennifer Gale

“The whole year has been a string of amazing moments,” described Jennifer Gale, the Family Resource Coordinator at Rattlesnake Elementary in Missoula. Jennifer is a full time AmeriCorps member in the Literacy Support Corps through Women’s Opportunity and Resource Development (W.O.R.D.). She chose to serve in the Literacy Support Corps because she

wanted to “help foster an environment where family values can surface and be nurtured.” In a world where families are torn in many directions, she loves the idea of community building around children by helping parents connect with schools and community resources. She has spent the year doing just that.

“It is a place where parents can stay connected.”

Every morning when she arrives at school, children and parents are waiting for her to unlock the Family Resource Center (FRC) where they spend time until the morning bell rings. “It is amazing to see how often parents come in and just hang out with their kids,” she said. While they are there, parents can grab a hot cup of coffee, browse through the lending library or shelf of community resources, read the paper, or simply engage in good conversation. “The FRC is their place in the school,” Jennifer explained, “It is a place where parents can stay connected.”

Much of her time is spent coordinating literacy-based

family learning activities such as Tot Times, Literacy Lunches, and Family Fun Nights. In September the FRC partnered with Indian Education to sponsor a Pow Wow Family Fun Night. “I was amazed by the number of people that came,” she said, “about 200 attended!” Originally from Vermont, Jennifer was unfamiliar with Native American culture and in awe of this new experience filled with rhythm, bright colors, and dance. She explained, “We planned a pot luck dinner. I didn’t think very many people would come if they had to bring something, but everyone was interested. It was a wonderful way to build partnerships and connect cultures, schools, and volunteers.”

Additionally, Jennifer coordinates meaningful volunteer opportunities for community members invested in children and education. Recently she contacted local banks asking them to participate in a tutoring program. Several banks have agreed to send their employees to volunteer at the school as tutors, and pay them for their time.



Above: Bill McBroom and Dave Kendall, Rattlesnake School Volunteers

In celebration of National and Global Youth Service Day, Jennifer coordinated a school wide volunteer project. Parents accompanied their children in

## Join the Literacy Support Corps Team

*“The best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service of others” -Gandhi.*



Join AmeriCorps! Women’s Opportunity and Resource Development, WORD, is now recruiting for full-time positions working with families and schools in the Missoula and Bitterroot Valleys. Positions begin August 15, 2007. Living stipend, Education Award, Health Insurance.

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volunteering at the Program in Ecological Agriculture and Society (PEAS) Farm. The PEAS Farm produces “tens of thousands of pounds of fruits and vegetables each season for low-income Missoulians.” The service project was another example of developing school-family partnerships and connecting families to community resources.

Right: Anna Blair, a student at Rattlesnake Elementary, doing “spring chores” at the PEAS Farm during a school-wide service project for National and Global Youth Service Day



In reflection of her year with the Literacy Support Corps Jennifer expressed, “I can’t even imagine how much this year will benefit me in the future! I’ve learned so much about coordinating, administrating, outreach, and volunteerism. I’ve learned how to conduct myself as a professional.” She explained that the greatest skill she’s developed from serving in

AmeriCorps is “being comfortable speaking in front of a group.” She described the anxiety she used to feel when having to speak in public. “My hands and voice used to shake whenever I spoke in front of people,” she explained. “My knees would visibly shake, so I’d make sure not to wear heels or a skirt whenever I had to speak. But now I have no problem.”

Jennifer expressed a deep appreciation for the relationships she’s developed with parents that visit the FRC. Speaking of one parent she said, “I’m amazed at the amount of knowledge she has about resources, and how well she can survive on very little.” She described the wealth of knowledge she gained from people living in poverty, and looked a little sheepish when she added, “All I taught her was how to Google.”

“One of my goals for this year was to figure out what I want to do with my life,” Jennifer stated. She described that her work with families and resources has motivated her to continue her education in pursuit of a graduate degree and career in Family Therapy. She said, “This year has given me positive direction and skills to pursue a job I can feel good about.”

# "Grad-itude"

Highschool graduation is the ending of one chapter in the big book of life, and the beginning of another. As senioritis sets in and the question, "What does my future hold" hangs in the balance, many students are full of mixed emotions. Parents too feel mixed emotions. The parent child relationship changes, but guidance and support are still needed.

One way parents can support their senior during this transition time is to encourage seniors to express their gratitude.

Carleton Kendrick, Ed.M., LCSW, nationally recognized parenting expert, popular public speaker, and acclaimed author explained, "As graduation approaches, seniors become nostalgic, cling to one another, and recount endless tales from their shared past. While your highly emotional senior is in such a mindful state, you might ask her to consider expressing gratitude to the special people in her life who believed in her when she had lost belief in herself, who comforted her when her dreams were shattered, and who gave her safe harbor when her world seemed out of control. These are the mentors, family members, teachers, coaches, friends, and clergy -- **caring souls who inspired your teen, who realized and confirmed her worth and potential, and who never withheld their encouragement and support.**

These guiding lights were your teen's allies, and defenders, even after he had made disappointing or bad choices and

fallen from grace. They did not blame him or shame him. They put themselves in your teen's shoes, empathizing and giving him a soft place to fall. When your teen got into trouble or lost his way, they reminded him that he was in trouble because he had made poor choices, because he was confused or afraid -- not because he was a bad kid. **They championed him and challenged him to take risks and assume responsibilities when fear and self-doubt weakened his resolve.** They believed in him totally.

Looking back at your own adolescence, did you have anyone to turn to when your heart was broken, when you felt hopeless, or when you were crippled by low self-worth? If you did have someone who would not let you drown, who breathed courage into you, and who was always there with an embrace and a kind word, then you know how valuable these special people were to you and how priceless they have been in your teen's life.

When I was in college, I attended a testimonial dinner for my high-school basketball coach. I told him that while he had taught me how to become a better basketball player, he had also helped me become a better man."

Reflection of mentoring experiences lend themselves to feelings of empowerment that seniors can attach themselves to as life as they know it changes.

## Hamilton Seniors Show their "Grad-itude"



Hamilton High School Class of 2007, with the support of Ellen Ryter, Family Resource Center Coordinator, planned, prepared, and hosted a community appreciation luncheon, where seniors showed appreciation to the parents, teachers, volunteers, businesses, and community members that supported them during their high school career.

Seniors put an incredible amount of effort into the event. They sent out over 300 invitations, set up, proudly made and served potluck dishes, presented special awards, and cleaned up after all was said and done. It was a wonderful evening of recognition and thanks.



## Notes From the Director



Jeanne Moon, Family Resource Center Program Director at WORD

Over the years of working with parents, educators and community members through Family Resource Centers I've noticed nearly everyone refers to the children at the center of conversation as "my kids" or "our kids." The collective caring for children is obvious, and reinforces a basic tenet of WORD programs, a belief that each person is doing the very best they can with the knowledge and resources they have.

This year the Literacy Support Corps has been fortunate to have a member, Emily Crawford, who is trained and skilled in video journalism. With Emily's expertise, we've created a video of teachers, parents, principals, and superintendents, and community members sharing their experience in working together to support children and learning. Our intent with the film is to increase dialogue and actions between educators and parents to strengthen partnerships that support learning.

Through the hours and hours of interviews recorded to create this film, some common themes emerge. The interviews bring to light the importance of how we choose to use our time, especially the time we have to influence the lives of children. Despite all our technological advances, research continually affirms that nothing supersedes personal interaction for effectiveness of communication and learning. If we care about children, education, families, and healthy communities, we must *make* and take the time to personally engage with each other and our children. As Superior Elementary Principal Chris Martineau shared when we interviewed him, "I really don't believe there's such a thing as quality time versus quantity time. I think quantity time turns into quality time."

Over the coming year, we will be looking for opportunities to share this film and meaningful conversation with educators, parents, and community members. As Chris also said in his interview, "We need to keep encouraging each other." I couldn't agree more.



### Coming Soon....

## "Our Children" *A Catalyst for Conversation*

WORD Family Resource Centers' Program has worked with parents and educators in Western Montana since 1993. One goal of the program is to increase communication and interaction between parents and educators in support of their children's education. Recently, parents, teachers, and administrators sat down with Emily Crawford, the Literacy Support Corps/ WORD video journalist, to share the ups and downs of their experience raising and teaching children, to create a meaningful basis for dialogue. If you'd like us to share with your staff or community group please contact Jeanne Moon at WORD (406)543-3550 x 248, or email [joon@wordinc.org](mailto:joon@wordinc.org).



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**Missoula**

**Bonner Elementary**

9045 Highway 200  
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406-258-6151  
[family@bonner.k12.mt.us](mailto:family@bonner.k12.mt.us)

**Community Women's Collective**

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**Early Head Start**

2121 39th Street Suite 1  
Missoula, MT 59803  
406-251-9410  
[camillesleight@gmail.com](mailto:camillesleight@gmail.com)

**Franklin Elementary**

1901 S. 10th West  
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406-327-0483  
[franklinfrc@mcps.k12.mt.us](mailto:franklinfrc@mcps.k12.mt.us)

**Hawthorne Elementary**

2835 S. 3rd West  
Missoula, MT 59804  
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[frchawthorne@mcps.k12.mt.us](mailto:frchawthorne@mcps.k12.mt.us)

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**Lowell Elementary**

1200 Sherwood  
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406-327-0390  
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**Paxson Elementary**

101 Evans  
Missoula, MT 59801  
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**Rattlesnake Elementary**

1220 Pineview  
Missoula, MT 59802  
406-542-4914  
[resfrc@mcps.k12.mt.us](mailto:resfrc@mcps.k12.mt.us)

**Russell Elementary**

3216 Russell St.  
Missoula, MT 59801  
406-728-2400 ext 4846  
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**Bitterroot Valley**

**Daly Elementary**

208 Daly Ave.  
Hamilton, Mt 59840  
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**Florence Elementary**

5602 Hwy 93  
Florence, MT 59833  
406-273-6741 ext 203  
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**Ravalli Head Start**

81 Kurtz Lane  
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**Hamilton Middle School**

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**Hamilton High School**

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**Kids First**

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Hamilton, MT 59840  
406-375-9588  
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**Lone Rock Elementary**

1112 Three Mile Cr. Rd.  
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[jcalhoon@lonerockschool.org](mailto:jcalhoon@lonerockschool.org)

**Stevensville Elementary**

300 Park Ave.  
Stevensville, MT 59870  
406-777-5613 ext 351  
[johnsond@stevensville.k12.mt.us](mailto:johnsond@stevensville.k12.mt.us)

**Washington Primary**

225 N. 5th St.  
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oiuoiu

**Victor School**

425 N. 4th St.  
Victor, MT 59875  
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**Superior**

**Superior Elementary**

1003 5th Ave. East  
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