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For more info:

www.wordinc.org/frc

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

- Target

Newsletter by:

Julie Stevens

Finding Meaning

"I remember what it felt like to be a working parent," explained Rhonda Huguet, as she excitedly talked about being part of the Family Resource Center program.

When Rhonda Huguet's daughter attended Mt. Jumbo Elementary School she was a full-time working mother. "I was plagued by Mommy-guilt," she said. She described her desire to be involved at her daughter's school but lacked the time to be "Room Mom or PTA president."

"I was impressed with the activities they did and the connection it offered between families and the school."

Fortunately the Family Resource Center at Mt Jumbo offered activities at various times of the day including evenings so working parents like Rhonda could connect and be involved with their child's school. "I was impressed with the activities they did," she said, "and the connection it offered between families and the school."

Later Rhonda's daughter attended Prescott Elementary. "Prescott didn't have an FRC," she explained, "and I needed one. I had no place to go in the school. I was a stay-at-home Mom with two toddler boys at the time, so when I went to the school to volunteer in my daughter's classroom there was no place to feel comfortable waiting."

When Rhonda's daughter started fifth grade, Prescott Elementary closed and Rattlesnake Elementary opened. Luckily, once again the school offered a Family Resource Center. "I volunteered a lot that year in the Center with Jane Olsen, the Center coordinator. "I grilled her about her job," Rhonda said. "I remember thinking that when I return to work, my job will have to have meaning and be rewarding."

Now that Rhonda's boys are in school, she is excited to be at the school with her children. Rhonda joined WORD's AmeriCorps program, the Literacy Support Corp and is the new Rattlesnake Family Resource Center Coordinator. Her goals this year are to engage families and strengthen community ties with the school, while increasing her own comfort level and confidence in returning to the work force.



The 2007-2008 Literacy Support Corps

Bottom Row Left to Right: Danielle DeWitt, Amy Anderson, Heather Hudson, Megan Westover, Donna Chambers, Karin Balke, Tina Erickson

Top Row Left to Right: Staci Hayes, Kimberly Apryle, Mandy Townsley, Margaret Reardon, Christina Owsley, Ronda Huguet

Not Pictured: Carol Bellin

Notes From the Director



Jeanne Moon, Program Director for WORD Family Resource Centers

This fall marks WORD's 14th year working with schools to develop Family Resource Centers, the 6th year WORD offers the Literacy Support Corps as a staffing resource for Family Resource Centers, and the 1st year of a new three year grant cycle. Through our

many stages and steps of program development, one thing remains very clearly in focus; the critical importance of relationships. Many times over the years, when talking about Family Resource Centers, I've found myself stressing with partners and staff that this program is built on relationships.

In the Spring 2007 issue of *The School Administrator* Margaret Wheatley Ed.D. and Deborah Frieze published an article titled How Large-Scale Change Really Happens – Working With Emergence. They use the emergence process to describe changes in public education. This process explains how the world changes, “not with one person at a time, but as networks of relationships form among people who share a common cause and vision of what’s possible.”

Wheatley describes how people want to connect with each other, want to learn, and want to contribute to others. We all want our children to be healthy and have better lives. These desires are inherent; they do not require external motivators. People learn from each other, find support, create solutions, and gradually discover new capabilities within networks of trusting relationships.

It is within these relationships that new knowledge, practices, courage, and commitment continue to develop the work of Family Resource Centers despite the ebbs and flows of resources. When a Family Resource Center loses its room in a school, folks discover the program is built on relationships more than a space. When one source of funding support closes, another opens through the relationships developed in the work. When an important person leaves the program, the existing strong relationships inform the next person who steps in.

Family Resource Centers develop networks of support for the benefit of parents, children, educators and communities as a whole. Just as Wheatley described, these networks are not the result of one person. They are “relationships among people who share a common cause and vision of what’s possible.” We look forward to connecting with more kindred spirits this year.

What Happens in a Family Resource Center?



The 2006-2007 Literacy Support Corps

Every year the Literacy Support Corps, along with all AmeriCorps members around the nation, take a pledge to “get things done for America.”

Each year members take this to heart as they serve in Family Resource Centers in Missoula, the Bitterroot, and Superior schools. The following articles on pages 3-5 highlight the amazing accomplishments of the 2006-2007 school year, and describe activities and services Family Resource Centers provide to **get things done for Montana**.

A Connecting Place...

The Family Resource Center is a place where parents can connect with the school, community, and their children. It is their place in the school. Families are welcome to borrow books from lending libraries, connect with community resources, or simply grab a cup of coffee and read the newspaper.



11,336 adults and
7,000 children visited
Centers

Left: The Lending Library at Rattlesnake School

“Post office” is a continuous program offered at many Family Resource Centers that helps connect parents and children while building literacy. Students are able to write letters to special adults and mail them through the Center’s post office. The FRC Coordinator contacts the adults to whom the letters are addressed and lets them know that they have a letter waiting for them at the Family Resource Center from a special student. They are invited to pick up the letter and write a response to the student. Finally, a volunteer “mailman” delivers the letters to excited students.

Several busy families have expressed great appreciation for the connection “Post Office” offers them. They are able to participate with their child at school without a large time commitment. When schedules do not allow for time off work or even the ability to commit to being at the school at a specific time, the flexibility of this program allows them to stop in on a lunch break, a few minutes prior to picking up their child, or whenever they can.

Finally, this program allows students the opportunity to have meaningful connections with members of the community. One student wrote a letter to the Superintendent. The student was so excited to get a personal letter in return!



Post Office at Lowell School

Activities

Family Resource Center staff, parents, community partners, and school staff coordinate various parent and community involvement activities throughout the year. Activities are offered at various times of the day so parents with all types of schedules can stay connected.



Right: Fifth grade Literacy Lunch at Lowell School

Literacy lunches are popular activities at all the schools. Parents or other special adults are simply invited to the school to eat lunch with their student. They also participate in a fun literacy-based activity that can be replicated at home to encourage learning at home. While parents are at the school they have an opportunity to connect with other parents and teachers. Finally, kids LOVE to have a special adult visit their school!

1,102 activities were facilitated through the
Family Resource Centers

18,511 adults attended, **28,372** children attended

Family Fun Nights are fun for the entire family! They are held at the school in the evening. Parents, teachers, and community members, and students come together for a fun no-pressure evening. Often they include a literacy-based activity or culturally educational theme. .



Pumpkin Carving Family Fun Night

Resources

Family Resource Centers facilitate a large number of parent and community volunteers in the schools each year. They seek out and develop community partnerships that support families and education. Additionally, they coordinate an incredible amount of donations made to the schools and families.



2803 volunteers donated
8193.25 hours through the Centers

Community businesses and organizations want to support learning and find meaningful ways through Family Resource Centers.



254 community partnerships were supported through the Centers



Left: The clothing closets, like this one at Rattlesnake School, are completely made up of donations from parents and the community.

\$46,236 in donations were made through the Centers

Referrals

Family Resource Centers help many families connect to community resources. A wide array of information is available about services that support learning and families in the school and community. Additionally, some centers are able to offer clothing closets, school supplies, and household supplies.



Above: Mara Panich gives a student warm gloves for a cold recess

Right : Community Information at Rattlesnake School

486 referrals for basic needs (i.e. food, housing, energy) were made through the Centers

139 childcare referrals

242 health referrals

356 education referrals

Below: Various Community Resource Partners around Missoula



Early Education Activities

by Laura Pickett, Parent Educator

Through a variety of early childhood activities and programs provided through our Family Resource Centers, we encourage parents to engage and participate in their children’s learning. Information is shared and modeled for parents and caregivers about child development, emergent literacy, community resources/ services, and school readiness. These informal, **free** activities provide opportunities for parents and young children of our community to play together while building vital language, literacy, fine motor, social, and emotional skills! Parents have opportunities to network and share knowledge, ideas and concerns with one another too.



“Ready, Set, Go!” at Lewis and Clark Elementary

Ready, Set, Go! - An event for incoming kindergartners and their parents/ care givers. Families begin by participating together in a variety of fun learning activities and making some take home learning games. Then, while the children take a short tour of the school and are read a few stories, information about the school and kindergarten, is shared with the parents, along with ways parents can support their child’s transition into school.

Little Hands- A monthly play-group for children 3-5 years old that is designed to build the child’s fine motor, gross motor and cognitive skills.



Little Hands at Russell School

Our monthly *Book Some Time With Me* story hours have began at Bonner, Lewis and Clark and Rattlesnake. Along with a story or two, a variety of games and activities occur.



ABC’s at Russell Elementary School

A B C’s of Kindergarten Readiness -A five session interactive class for incoming fall kindergartners and their parents. This class is designed to increase parent’s knowledge and comfort of the school, and strengthen their ability to support their child in developing skills that are helpful for a successful transition into school. The children have opportunities to meet some of their peers, be in a school setting, and practice some of the skills/ activities that they will encounter in kindergarten. Families participate in whole group activities, parent discussion groups and Parent/child activities each session.

Outreach

Family Resource Center staff spend their time connecting with people and connecting people to each another. They make personal phone calls, send letters, distribute newsletters, and have many many personal conversations.

- 166,042** printed outreach distributed
- 393** mass media outreach made
- 14,958** phone calls made to parents/ community
- 8726** personal notes or invitations sent to parents/community



Making a connection

Family Resource Centers

2007-2008

Missoula County

Bonner Elementary

9045 Highway 200
Bonner, MT 59823
406-258-6151
family@bonner.k12.mt.us

Early Head Start

2121 39th Street Suite 1
Missoula, MT 59803
406-251-9410
ameri-corpsehs@ravalliheadstart.org

Lewis and Clark Elementary

2901 Park St.
Missoula, MT 59801
406-327-6949
kmbalke@mcps.k12.mt.us

Rattlesnake Elementary

1220 Pineview
Missoula, MT 59802
406-542-4914
resfrc@mcps.k12.mt.us

Young Family Resource Center

2525 Palmer Suite 1
Missoula, MT 59808
406-543-3550
mwestover@wordinc.org

Ravalli County

Florence Elementary

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

Ravalli Head Start

81 Kurtz Lane
Hamilton, MT 59840
406-363-1217 ext 20
stacih@ravalliheadstart.org

Kids First

103 S. 9th St. #105
Hamilton, MT 59840
406-375-9588
jsemple@bitterrootkids.org

Lone Rock Elementary

1112 Three Mile Cr. Rd.
Hamilton, MT 59840
406-777-3314 ext 219
hudson@lonerockschool.org

Stevensville Elementary

300 Park Ave.
Stevensville, MT 59870
406-777-5613 ext 351
owselyc@stevensville.k12.mt.us

Victor School

425 N. 4th St.
Victor, MT 59875
406-642-3221 ext 231
reardon@victor.k12.mt.us

Darby Elementary

209 School Dr
Darby, MT 59829
aanderson@darby.k12.mt.us

Mineral County

Superior Elementary

1003 5th Ave. East
Superior, MT 59872
406-822-4851 ext 227
donna@sd3.k12.mt.us

Program Staff

WORD-Program Director

Jeanne Moon
2525 Palmer Suite 1
Missoula, MT 59808
406-543-3550 ext 248
jmoon@wordinc.org

Program Coordinator

Brook Clark
2525 Palmer Suite 1
Missoula, MT 59808
406-543-3550 ext 231
bclark@wordinc.org

Program Coordinator

Allison Kinney
2525 Palmer Suite 1
Missoula, MT 59808
406-543-3550 ext 270
akinney@wordinc.org

Parent Educator

Laura Pickett
2525 Palmer Suite 1
406-543-3550 ext 255
lpickett@wordinc.org

WORD-Family Resource Centers, 2525 Palmer St. Suite 1, Missoula, MT 59808

Phone: (406) 543-3550 Fax: (406) 721-4584

Website: www.wordinc.org/frc