

Head Start Highlights Food Insecurity

Food insecurity affects 16% of households with children, or to put it another way 1 in 11 children in the U.S. struggles with hunger. Over time childhood hunger can impact a child physically, mentally, behaviorally, and developmentally, and lead to issues in the classroom.

The issue of food insecurity is all too familiar to many families in Head Start. Approximately 120 Head Start family service, health, and nutrition staff, along with a variety of community partners gathered Sept. 29 for an event about strategies to combat childhood hunger.

Virginia's First Lady works to end childhood hunger across Virginia

Hunter Mill District Supervisor Catherine M. Hudgins provided the Welcome and Introduction for guest speaker Dorothy McAuliffe.

McAuliffe opened with a speech and Q&A about her work to expand access to federal nutrition programs and end childhood hunger in the commonwealth of Virginia. McAuliffe chairs the Commonwealth Council on Bridging the Nutritional Divide which is focused on eliminating childhood hunger by promoting community efforts that link locally grown food, education, health and nutrition.

"Every child deserves access to healthy food – the essential fuel they need to learn and grow," said McAuliffe. "By ensuring their strong

start today, we are investing in the continued strength of the commonwealth and the well-being of all those who live and work in our communities."

Panelists discuss food insecurity in Fairfax County

Dr. Terri Siggins, Fairfax County Department of Health/Fairfax Food Council moderated a panel discussion featuring experts in their fields.

Dr. Essel, George Washington University School of Medicine, described the negative impact of food insecurity on growing children. He explained that pediatricians can



Dr. Essel and the panel present information to 120 Head Start staff and community partners about food insecurity in our community.

play a central role in screening and identifying children at risk for food insecurity and in connecting families with needed community resources. The American Academy of Pediatrics



OFC Director Anne-Marie Twohie; panelist, Dr. Kofi Essel; HS Policy Council Chair Alicia Doe; Virginia First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe; Supervisor Catherine Hudgins; and panelists Dr. Terri Siggins, Cecilia Vergaretti, and Aimee Garcia prepare for the panel discussion on food insecurity.

recommends using a simple two-question screening tool called the Hunger Vital Sign.

Aimee Garcia of the Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services described the agency's involvement in a variety of initiatives to alleviate hunger. These include intake for food assistance requests, coordination of the Food Providers Network, a Weekend Backpack Food Program offered in partnership with the public schools, and more. She also touted the online Human Services Resource Guide, a source of information about various resources to help families.

Cecilia Vergaretti provided information about the operations of the Capital Area Food Bank which works with 100 different food pantries throughout the region. She emphasized the shift to better methods for determining pockets of need throughout the community, and the shift to offering healthier food options to those using the food bank.

Fun with STEM at Fall for Fairfax!

A little rain did not dampen the spirits of children and families who stopped by the OFC booth at the Fall for Fairfax Kidsfest, Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 1 and 2! They were able to try their hands at a variety of free, fun and engaging, STEM-related activities. OFC staff helped families to make mini-terrariums, test the physics of wrecking balls, build with Giant Jenga, tinker with a marble run made of recycled parts, and use geometric foam shapes to design an “invention” they could keep.

A team of OFC staff from various departments began meeting several weeks before the event to plan the activities, prepare prototypes of the crafts, order the materials needed for the event, and recruit staff to work in the booth. “Having a strong team to support the effort made the process much easier,” said team member and SACC Program Administrator Beth Leggat.

“Our team consisted of Shauna Skerman, CEPS; Angela Morlu, Communications; and Milenka St. Clair, CCAR; Kathy Uhrich and Cecie Boggs, IFEL; and Rhonda Houck, VPI.”

The activities were very well received across all ages this year. They were designed to provide families with ideas for easy ways to engage in STEM discovery at home. Using recycled materials and inexpensive supplies from the hardware and dollar stores kept the cost accessible for families who want to make their own versions.



Families enjoy planting bush beans in tiny terrariums to care for at home.



Children work together to erect a tower of Giant Jenga blocks!



The Wrecking Balls station encourages active exploration as children build and knock down towers. Children let their imaginations guide them as they design their own creations from stickers of various shapes and patterns.

SACC Celebrates International Day of Peace

Children at School Age Child Care centers, including Forestdale, Stenwood, Westlawn and Virginia Run, were thrilled to be able to draw their vision of peace as part of CHALK4PEACE's Draw the World Together Tour. CHALK4PEACE began in 2003 in Arlington, VA as a Sunday sidewalk chalk project for children. Since then, this creative presentation has spread to more than 400 sites around the world with more than half a million young artists of all ages.



Children at Stenwood and Forestdale SACC enjoy making chalk art.



Wynne Busman of the Fairfax County Child Care Advisory Council and Infant Toddler Family Day Care, and Betsi Closter of OFC who were both presenters at the Regional ECE Summit are pictured with Monica Jackson, chair of the CCAC.

OFC Participates in Regional Early Care and Education Summit

Staff from the Office for Children joined more than 100 stakeholders from Washington D.C., Maryland, and Virginia for the Regional Early Care and Education Summit on Sept. 19, 2016. A wide variety of participants attended, representing early childhood professionals; partners and advocates; higher education; government and philanthropy.

Wynne Busman of the Fairfax County Child Care Advisory Council and Infant Toddler Family Day Care, and Betsi Closter of OFC were both presenters at the event. OFC Director Anne-Marie Twohie, CCAC Chair Monica Jackson, and Fairfax Futures Director Vera Steiner Blore were also in attendance.

The main focus of this event was to discuss a regional plan to link competencies to quality and compensation for the early childhood workforce. Organizers have pinpointed several vital issues:

- The ECE workforce is crucial for the development of our region's children.
- Early childhood educators require a unique set of competencies that should be made more explicit.
- The ECE workforce is transient across D.C., Maryland and Virginia; however, competencies and compensation do not translate across jurisdictions.

These conditions have led to the need for a standardized system throughout the region. This would require an investment in developing and implementing:

- An ECE region-wide career pathways document based on competencies that are tied to compensation.

- A mechanism for portable competency verification by a trusted third party.
- A compensation plan, and a commitment to and funding for connecting competencies to compensation.

This career pathways document will establish a common set of quality standards for competencies at different levels including suggested compensation levels that are linked to identified competencies.

Organizers envision a three-phased development and implementation process that will culminate in a projected rollout in September of 2017.

"I am honored to represent Fairfax on the core team for this initiative," said Closter. The outcome will recognize and compensate the important work that early childhood professionals do each day across the region."

Promoting Executive Function Skills through Mind in the Making



This fall, staff representatives from each OFC program, along with several other county programs completed the Mind in the Making Institute.



The Office for Children is committed to working across systems to ensure real equity of opportunity for all children and their families. Bringing Mind in the Making to the community is an important component of this effort. By putting this important research into action we promote the executive function skills that help children, and the adults who care for them, to thrive.



Over the past several years OFC program areas have participated in various MITM learning opportunities. These efforts led OFC to organize our efforts to embed MITM into the services provided by all OFC teams, working together to ensure the best outcomes for children and families, especially those in greatest need.



In order to build community capacity, and a strong foundation for the Office for Children's MITM efforts, staff from all OFC divisions as well as partners from the Fairfax County Public Library, Fairfax County Public Schools, and Fairfax County Department of Family Services' Children, Youth and Families division, participated in a three-day MITM Institute co-facilitated by MITM Senior Manager Erin Ramsey, and School Age Child Care Regional Supervisor Anita McElhiney and Program Administrator Kevin Mathews.

With the goal of integration of MITM into our work over the coming year, we will build on and expand our work with community partners and deepen our engagement with families with the shared goal of supporting children's optimal development and success in school and beyond.

O F C Office for Children

This employee newsletter is published by the Office for Children, a division of the Fairfax County Dept. of Family Services. If you have any questions, contact Angela Morlu at 703-324-7528 or Nancy McDonough at 703-324-8042. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc.



A Fairfax County, VA Publication



Reasonable accommodations made upon request; call 703-324-8000 or TTY 711.