



August 2008 Newsletter

Information for all Early Childhood Educators

DIRECTORS: PRINT NEWSLETTER FROM COALITION WEBSITE TO COPY AND SHARE WITH TEACHERS!

LOOK for the STARS



Super Kids + Super Care = Star-Bright Futures

See the *Look for the Stars* insert for details on the QIS process and next steps.

The Coalition is preparing to roll out the next phase of the **Look for the Stars** initiative! While the entire Coalition staff is always available to support providers, the Look for Stars team is here to answer QIS questions, provide resources, and work with programs to make quality improvements.

Under the leadership of **Janet Kahn**, Executive Director, **Yvette Robison** is working with **Mary Wolf** to coordinate this next phase of the Look for the Stars Initiative and will facilitate the next Directors Connection series; **Marjorie Fondacaro** will be a resource for directors on infant and toddler issues and will conduct a training series for family providers; early childhood specialists **Candy Exline** and **Cindy Wentzel**, who had been working with directors and teachers as mentor/coaches under a Coalition contract with SCTI, will continue in that role as Coalition employees; and **Lynne Weinick**, who comes to the Coalition with a wealth of early childhood experience, will provide onsite support to family child care providers. **Dianne Rose** will continue to monitor and assist VPK programs, but with one difference - she got married and is now **Dianne Rose Lawrence**. **Julia Smirnov** provides administrative assistance and fields phone calls, but her primary responsibility remains general program and VPK support.



STRDE Update

The Substitute and Teacher Recruitment, Development and Education (STRDE) Program is now starting its 3rd year. The STRDE program (formerly STAR) provides a pool of qualified, screened substitutes in the event of a teacher absence or other situation. Last year over 1000 substitute days, or 7000 hours of sub time, was provided!

All participating directors should have renewed their contracts if they are planning to continue using STRDE services. For those considering STRDE, please email mail@earlylearningcoalitionsarasota.org or call



313-1304 for information or with questions. Erin Lawrence returned to school full time and Candy Exline is handling this position in the interim.

Literacy Grant Awarded

The Community Foundation of Sarasota County has awarded a major grant to agencies in our community to promote family literacy, focusing on children from birth through middle school, to be known as **LEAF: Literacy Empowers All Families**.

Grant recipients include the Sarasota County School system for initiatives in the elementary schools, and three organizations which are collaborating on the birth to five year old age group: The **Sarasota County Library System**, the **Early Learning Coalition** and **Children First**, which is also working with **HIPPY** on this initiative. The Sarasota County Library is overseeing a program for children in identified areas to receive books through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library; Children First is offering a "literacy camp" for children entering kindergarten, will provide literacy mentoring for parents and teachers, and is sending postcards to children entering kindergarten to help them stay on top of the skills they learned in preschool. (A sample of this postcard is included so that teachers can talk to children in their class - and their parents - about the activities suggested in the postcards.)



The Coalition is working on the development of a comprehensive social marketing campaign to remind parents how critically important they are to their child's future success in school and in life, including easy simple ways that parents can impact early literacy skills. How parents interact with their child, especially in the years from birth to 5 when the brain is developing so rapidly, can establish patterns that profoundly influence their child's development, negative or positive, and can have an effect that lasts a lifetime.

Just for Family Providers

Many family providers attended the WEDU training series, **A Place of Our Own**, which focused on topics relating to quality care for children in a home setting. Now WEDU is planning to host a free luncheon to recognize the dedicated, hardworking family providers in our community. Come to mingle with your peers, hear a presentation from one of the "personalities" from the A Place of Our Own show and enjoy lunch at the Double Tree Hotel in Tampa on



Saturday, October 4th. Call Sartura Smith at WEDU for details: 1-800-354-9338 ext. 2243



VPK NEWS

Summer VPK is drawing to a close and the 2008/2009 School Year VPK program will be here before you know it.

One last reminder that the **Coalition must have complete and accurate VPK applications on file and approved for VPK programs to start.** Any provider that is missing information or whose **teachers or director credentials have expired or whose level 2 background screenings have expired, including FBI clearance, will not be approved to start.** Julia Smirnov has been faxing requests for missing information or documentation to directors. Please submit any missing information right away. Thank you for your cooperation in ensuring that all VPK requirements are met!

In Search of VPK VIP*S!



**Very Innovative Persons*

Enclosed is a flyer describing a new publication that is in the works. Lisa Allen, Southwest Regional VPK Facilitator, is putting together a newsletter designed to recognize innovative VPK staff in our region and provide a forum to share activities, ideas and strategies that have been successful in VPK classrooms. Lisa is asking VPK providers to submit recommendations for teachers to be featured, including photos and a brief description of an activity or approach that has been especially effective. Submissions should be made to the Early Learning Coalition which will then pass them on to Lisa.

To be considered for the September issue submissions must be received by August 20th. Please call Dianne Rose Lawrence at 954-4830 ext. 2 if you questions about what would be appropriate. We hope to have many entries to share. **This is a great way to honor our dedicated and hardworking VPK teachers!**

“Keeping Your Children Safe” Program

Keeping Your Children Safe is a free sexual predator educational awareness program designed to provide information on safeguarding children in our community. The presentation consists of a short video and follow up question and answer period. As stated in the enclosed flyer, “This comprehensive yet sensitive presentation will show you how to better prepare yourself in protecting your children...” The flyer has contact

information for those interested in scheduling this program for staff and/or parents.

It’s Not Too Late to Participate! Join the “Because It Matters” Campaign!



Enclosed with the newsletter is a **Because It Matters** bookmark donated by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice. Listed on the bookmark are 10 simple actions that, if taken, would enhance the quality of life for each of us personally and as a community. The **Because It Matters** campaign encourages all of us to take those actions and to become more aware of what we do and how our actions affect others, with the goal of creating a **Community of Caring** step by step, person by person.

As was mentioned in the June newsletter, the Gulf Coast Community Foundation has generously offered to support local early childhood programs to become part of the **Because It Matters Community of Caring’s** new preschool component. This program will enable child care providers to become a **Community of Caring** site and offer a **character education program** that strengthens parent involvement, can be incorporated into existing programs, and can be continued when children enter kindergarten.


This is a wonderful opportunity to support children’s social and emotional well being and enhance the character development component of your curriculum, a program element required by the State and the Early Learning Coalition. To participate in the pilot group that will start in early fall, please call 954-4830, ext. 4.

The Resource Room

Have you checked out the Resource Room lately?? Drop by for books, videos and activity ideas covering almost every area of early childhood care and education. **VPK directors please note:** “It’s Okay to Play in VPK” manual and CD are available. See you there!

Training Information

ECA Conference scholarships will be offered again this year! Information coming soon!

- Training flyers for the **Florida Center** and **ECA** are enclosed, take a look and see what’s coming up!
- The next Director’s Connection meeting will be in September, watch your email for dates.
-  Many trainings this year will be held as a series and incorporate a follow up activity component to ensure that

Visit our website! Minutes of meetings and scholarship applications are posted. A calendar of meetings is also available, as well as the community training calendar. Look us up and give us your feedback! If any director or teacher would like to receive a copy of this newsletter via email, contact the Coalition at the general email address below.

Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County
Coalition Administrative Office
1750 17th Street, Unit K-1 Sarasota, FL 34234
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Early Learning Coalition’s Child Care Connection
(Resource & Referral, Scholarship Child Care Program, Provider Payments)
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knowledge learned is implemented in the classroom.
More information on this new approach will follow!

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