



FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES
For Our Children's Future



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Fireworks by Stephanie Nicholson—Email-spsteine@yahoo.com



Fall 2005 Newsletter

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**Newsletter editor—
Grace Sharples Cooke**

FSS Programs -

- Fairmount Early Intervention Center
- Family Partnership Program
- Family School
- Project Peace for Teen Parents (co-administered with Pathways, PA)
- Penn Early Childhood Program
- SAFE— Home visiting program
- SCOH -Services to Children in their Own homes
- School-Based Extended Day Enrichment

He's going to be a great somebody one day

Every summer, when Head Start programs across the city close for vacation, the Penn Early Childhood Program opens a number of group speech, physical and occupational therapy programs for 3-5 year-old children receiving Early Intervention services. Here's a window onto one child's Penn Program experience this past summer.



Kasheem Jefferson is a sweet-faced four-year old boy. He's as slim and lithe as a young gazelle, and he's playing T-ball with four other children in the paved yard of the Catherine Elementary school in Southwest Philadelphia. The bases are chalked onto the pavement and the T-ball game is under the direction of special educa-

tion teacher Rethel Chapelle, and speech therapist, Bonnie Benson. They are teaching the group of preschoolers how to run from base to base, catch a ball, tag a player out, and communicate with their fellow team-mates. These activities also help Kasheem learn where his body is—so he can stop himself before he hits the wall.

Close at hand and playing enthusiastically, despite the hot summer sun, is his aunt, Valerie Groober. She recently left a well-paying position in the nursing field so she can care for Kasheem full time, and learn how to help him overcome his sensory and language delays. "I also need to know how to do these things," she says, gesturing towards the children as they work with the teachers, "so I can duplicate it."

When Kasheem's mother died unexpectedly in 2003, Valerie was awarded primary

Continued on the next page

A Partnership For Success—Family Partnership Program

Voluntary home visiting through Family Partnership means that families get in-home help with parenting, medical support, and even developmental assessments on the very young children (4 months to 5 years old) who may need testing.

Program Supervisor Annie Markovits says, "one primary goal is linking families to resources available in their

communities. For example, we're providing services to two moms who are working full time in a nursing home. Yet, their income doesn't cover their expenses, so we are helping them apply for medical insurance and food stamps. If we can get the children covered medically and nutritionally through state programs, the family will have more to spend on other basic needs like housing and education."

"This fall we're committed to helping families obtain public school mandated uniforms. Several of our low income families have multiple school aged children and affording uniforms is a real challenge."

When kids show up without uniforms, they feel self conscious. Thanks to a donation from one of our supporters, all families that need uniforms this September will have them.

He's going to be a great somebody one day (continued from the previous page)

custody. "My daughter will be 24 this year and now I have custody of a four year-old," Valerie says, "I look on Early Intervention (services with) Penn as a blessing ... my support group."

Valerie explains that special educators at the Penn Early Childhood Program have helped her learn why Kasheem "can't feel the way we can." She says "he hasn't developed his upper body muscles" and when he "falls onto the floor, or runs into the wall, he's doing it so he can feel his upper body. He doesn't feel the sensation that normal kids do." Kasheem sometimes also has trouble interpreting his environment. "He may not (have been) touched, but he'll feel touched," Valerie adds.

Robin Straight, Associate Director for Early Intervention at Family Support Services, says that for a child like Kasheem "not knowing where his body is, is a sensory delay."

At first, while Valerie knew that Kasheem needed speech therapy, she didn't recognize that he might need help in other ways. "I thought he was just not doing things because he didn't feel like it, but when I brought him to Penn (Early Childhood) I realized that sometimes he'd get a little confused, like when it was a shift of an activity or subject." But Valerie learned to adapt herself to Kasheem's needs by doing things differently; "I'll say, ok—we're finished this, and I'll talk him through to the next activity or chore." He's responding well, and Valerie says that "now he can tell me 'we're going to do this (an activity) then

this (another activity).' He can sequence better." Because she is more detailed and specific in asking Kasheem for what she wants, Kasheem has learned to be more detailed too.

Watching Kasheem go through Early Intervention Therapy has had other benefits for Valerie. It's "motivated me to do more reading, less T.V." and "it's given me patience ... because when you don't understand ... you don't know how to help."

"A lot of parents don't know which way to go to find resources, but if I don't know (whom to call), I'm going to find out. It's our job to lift up the phone and call... you need to be educated"

"I feel blessed," Valerie adds, "I know he's going to be a great somebody one day."

We are proud to announce —

On June 9th, 2005, the Philadelphia Outcome Measurement Project honored two Family Support Services staff members for their outstanding contributions to child welfare services in Philadelphia.

Amber Mackenzie, Associate Director for Child Welfare received the Trailblazer Award for her outstanding commitment and dedication to children and families in Philadelphia.

Hope Morrison, a Services to Children in their Own Homes (SCOH) Social worker, received the Staff recognition award for dedicated and conscientious work with children and their families.

Amber and Hope are just two of Family Support Services' many well-educated, creative, and kind staff-members who dedicate their lives to helping others. We'd like to salute each & every one!

Did you know?

The High/Scope Perry Preschool study is a Ypsilanti, Michigan-based research project that has spent 40 years tracking the economic benefits of high quality preschool programs for children from low income families.

- ◇ The original study followed a group of poor children from 1962, to 1989 and reported that for every \$1 of funding invested in a child's preschool education, there was a \$7 benefit that accrued to the public.
- ◇ Further study on these same children at age 40 shows that time has only increased that benefit.. The updated figures show that as these children get older the dollar benefit of those preschool years swells from \$7 to \$17 for every dollar originally invested.

There are all kinds of Annual Reports, but nothing pulls at the heartstrings quite like Pennsylvania's Child Abuse Annual Report for 2004. It noted 4,628 cases of substantiated child abuse, with 1,304 in Philadelphia.

- ◇ WHO —80% of Pennsylvania's child abusers were relatives. Parents and step-parents caused about 50% of all injuries to children. Mothers caused 4% more injuries than did fathers and were more than twice as likely to neglect their children. Fathers, however, were more like to commit sexual abuse. Baby sitters committed about 12% of all abuse.
- ◇ WHY —The most frequently cited contributing factors to child abuse were; stress (32 %), perpetrator's impaired judgment (20%), marginal parenting skills (11%), sexual deviancy (11%),the vulnerability of the child (7%), abuse between parent figures (7%), insufficient social support (4%), substance abuse (4%) and the perpetrator was abused as a child (3%).
- ◇ HOW —There were 44 abuse related child deaths in Pennsylvania in 2004. How did children die? 13 children died from traumatic injuries; 11 children died from severe neglect; 14 were suffocated; 4 were deliberately shot, and 2 were intentionally drowned.

News From Extended Day



Each year, when Family Support Services hires new teachers for the Extended Day Programs, Andrea Dominic (Director of After School Programs) and Ellen McCarel Mays (Associate Director for School Based Childcare) sort through hundreds of resumes.

“It’s a rigorous process,” says Andrea, “we have specific state licensing criteria we need to meet with respect to candidates educational background and experience, but we’re also looking for creative and thoughtful educators.”

“We’ve just hired a wonderful new Brookline After School director named Jana Fitzpatrick,” Andrea adds. “We’re very excited to have Jana because not only does she have a great academic background, but she brings with her a great skill set as a Math and Science teacher at the Haverford Middle school.” In fact, Andrea says “Brookline parents are already expressing excitement over Jana’s training and experience with the Chicago Math curriculum.”

“We hired Jana because she has the right educational background with a Bachelor of Arts in political science and a masters degree in multicultural education, but she also is enthu-

siastic, caring, calm and gentle with a meticulous attention to detail.”

Jana is just one of many talented teachers recently hired by FSS. Ellen McCarel Mays reports that Lisa Larney, the new director at Coopertown, has a masters degree in education and comes to FSS from the Plymouth Meeting Friends School. “She has a strong background in art, years of experience with young children, and a kind, but firm way with kids,” Ellen says “and all of these are good qualities for teaching success.”

While establishing general guidelines and curricula for teachers, Ellen and Andrea like to hire teachers who explore new ideas. For example, they are very proud of the Chatham Park After School Program for its decision to enroll in The American Heart Associations’ ‘Jump Rope for Heart’ fundraising program last spring. The children raised \$1,838!



Parenting Tips from Rethel and Stephanie— ways to help your children learn

Rethel Chapelle is a Special Educator with the Penn Early Childhood Program. Stephanie Bruno is a Speech and Language therapist. They say any parent can benefit from these tips to help their children learn.

- ◇ Talk your child through the day. Label, explain, describe and model the language you want them to use. For example, when you make a meal, verbally label the ingredients, explain what you are going to do, describing the process as it occurs. When a child says the wrong thing, reword it for them, modeling the right way. For example Child—“Kelly Pizza.” Parent—“Yes, we cooked a pizza for Kelly today.”
- ◇ Read to your children from the time that they can say Dada and Mama. Do it every day. Do it while you are waiting in line at the grocery store, or at the Doctor’s office. And, when picking books, remember that the younger the child, the shorter the book should be.
- ◇ Your child wants your time and attention and you can make learning fun for them just by participating in it yourself. That means doing the activity too. For example, if you are teaching your child about the environment by catching insects, don’t just say “you go get some bugs while Daddy waits here.” It’s much better to say; “Look, Daddy found a bug! Wow, doesn’t it look neat— hey, I see one for you over there, let’s go over and see — Look at the bug you found. Hey, I wonder what your bug is called. Let’s go find out.”
- ◇ When you talk to your child, remember that children are not little adults, and they may not always understand what you want. Be clear and check that your child knows what you expect. Remember that blame is not a good motivator for your child.
Don’t get mad —“Why didn’t you do what I told you? I’ve said it a thousand times”
Get specific — “Do you know what Mommy wants you to do?” “No?” “Ok, Mommy wants you to pick up your socks & clothes, and then you can come with me to take a bath.”

You’re invited to a party—

Come to a event that gives back by raising funds — for children through Family Support Services, to flood victims through Habitat For Humanity, and to the Philadelphia Tibetan Buddhist Center.

Who’s the host?

MATERIAL CULTURE - the oriental rug, folk-art, and international furnishings store that knows how to throw a great party, with food, live music, and artists in residence.

- When—Saturday November 5th at 7 PM
- Where—4700 Wissahickon Avenue, Phila.
- To enter—**\$20 contribution**
- Advance tickets available through Material Culture at www.materialculture.com

This event is open to the public

Web resource for parents:
WWW.zerotothree.org

This site offers terrific information, articles, advice, book titles, and research for parents of young children.

A Few Words From Our Supporters —

“It is almost impossible for a child to grow and develop into a self-sufficient individual without the nurturing care of a functioning family. Family Support Services provides the help, training and caring atmosphere to enable young parents to enjoy, manage and develop a family structure that benefits every member—”

Ted Robb

Ted Robb serves on the Philadelphia board of First Book, a non-profit organization that distributes new children’s books to struggling families once a month. Family Support Services uses its First Book grant to make sure that parents don’t have to wait for a trip to the library in order to reach for a beloved book. The books are precious, and the accumulation of these small libraries at home means a great deal to the children we serve.



Children in FSS’s programs are introduced to reading through activities supported by First Book’s monthly book program. Looking at, and talking about books and their pictures helps engage children in reading early.

“We believe in the mission of Family Support Services, because it emphasizes practical programs that build stronger families, stronger parenting skills, & stronger futures for children—”

Karen Kludjian and Bill Kozel

Karen Kludjian and Bill Kozel run an advertising company. During the holidays they discovered Family Support Services through The Agnes Irwin School, and asked if they could sponsor a family. We paired them with a married couple with many children... and no washer and dryer. They supplied new appliances and more, saving the parents many trips to the Laundromat, and providing the children with a new computer.

Recently Karen and Bill have taken their generosity a step further, by giving \$1000 of matching funds for the Agnes Irwin School’s students’ \$2000 grant for therapy equipment at The Fairmount Early Intervention Center.

Out of the Mouths of Children—as told by Andrea Dominic

When you are working with children, not a day goes by that something delightful doesn’t happen.

A couple of years back, there was this absolutely enchanting little girl, named Adelaide, who used to be in the after school program. She already had very definite ideas about what she was going to be when she grew up.

She told me “I’m going to be a brain surgeon when I grow up, and then I’m going to give you free brain surgery.”

“Well that’s very nice” I replied, “I’m sure that will come in handy some day!”

If you have a story to share please email it to gcooke@fssinc.org

Perspectives—The Kitchen Should Be A Welcoming Place

Jean Howe, our kind, highly skilled, new cook at Family School feeds our families breakfast, lunch and snacks and helps them develop healthy mealtime habits. Here, she talks about kids and food —

“ Because I have grandkids of my own and two daughters, I know ... that children are open to new experiences. So, if you introduce them to a wide variety of foods at an early age they develop a base that they can build on through life.”

Jean says that even with children, presentation, including color, matters just as much as flavor. She will persuade children to try just a bit of something new by making it look fresh and attractive. “Once you change the view, it makes things more appetizing and appealing.”

She also mixes the new with the tried & true. For example she will introduce fresh vegetables by integrating them into familiar recipes, like pasta with Alfredo sauce. Jean believes that food can make you an individual, so she asks “why eat the way everybody else eats?” She wants people to develop their own food personality.

Formerly a hotel chef and later a caterer for the non-profit ‘Project Homes’ Jean sums it all up— “the kitchen should be a welcoming place!”

The Family School Food and Nutrition program is generously funded by a grant from The Esther Gowen Hood Trust, a Mellon Mid-Atlantic Trust.



Children Love To Think



Play



And Laugh As They Learn



Family School Interview— Learning How To Love

“I am a recovered addict ... I’ve been four years clean.”

Crystal says it slowly and clearly, continuing “my children were taken from me due to my addiction to drugs and alcohol. Two of my kids were raised by their grandmother. One daughter was raised by my sister. My other son was put up for adoption.”

It wasn’t until DHS placed her very youngest daughter in foster care, that Crystal was able to turn her life around. “It took me two years to get my daughter back, but I never gave up hope.”

“When I was getting high I didn’t even care about myself.” But, she adds “today I know what it means to be a mother. I can’t turn back the past of not being a mother to the rest of my kids. But I can be a mother today.”

Crystal says Family School helped her a lot, and “being in parenting class gave me a lot of skills, and responsibilities ... I had two great teachers. They weren’t there just to be teachers; they were there to give us love, hope, responsibility and independence.”

“Without those two great teachers, I would not be able to have my daughter back in my life today.” Crystal



pauses, adding that because they had “faith in me (and)... patience,” they helped her learn to believe in herself.

While Parent Educators Ellen Latimore and Sandi Sherr demonstrated their faith in her, Crystal says their parenting classes showed her how to be a “good mother and a good person.”

“I learned how to be a responsible mother.” Crystal says, “I learned how to be more patient with my children, and to understand their needs.” And, she adds “...I learned to love in my support (group) at Family School.”

Sandi Sherr feels that her Parent Edu-

cator job at Family School involves more than just teaching effective parenting skills—she also must practice what she preaches, by parenting the parents themselves.

“I act like a parent...,” Sandi says. “At first meeting, I always find something positive to say to the parent ... because parents must experience the pleasure of receiving praise (themselves) in order to subsequently make their children feel good.” Sandi adds that “in many cases, no one has ever said a kind word to any of these adults.”

“I develop a relationship, I ask questions; which is what I want them to do with their children. I ask how they feel. I give them emotion words like, ‘that must have been scary – how did you feel,’ so that they will learn to give these words to their children. They need to be validated as human beings. Until you know that you are cared about — you cannot trust.

“A parent wants to make a child feel safe; physically safe, emotionally safe, with basic survival needs provided. Until the parent feels that safety themselves,” Sandi says, “he or she is not going to be able to effectively care for a child.”

Mural Painting—Episcopal Academy and Shipley School teachers brighten Fairmount Early Intervention Center and Family School



A Shipley teacher works on a mural

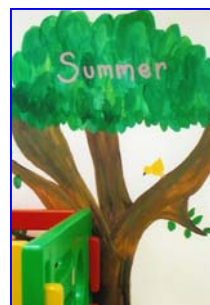
Teachers from The Shipley School and students and teachers from The Episcopal Academy put their artistic skills to use in mural painting service projects at Family School and Fairmount Early Intervention Center.

Service-minded, with thoughts of bringing delight to young children - they

came armed with paintbrushes and ideas, to turn empty wall space into windows onto other worlds. They wanted to bring gardens indoors, covering empty walls with murals that could spark imaginative play, and, like magicians, they transformed ordinary space into something special.

“We were all happy to spend a hot summer afternoon painting murals,” Mary French, art teacher at Episcopal Academy said. “Art can have such a positive effect on how people grow ... Fact of the matter, there was great spontaneous energy, and perhaps that will be communicated to the children”

“It was fun,” said Fifth-grade Shipley teacher Christine Sweetman, “and we are ready to do more, whenever a project comes up.”



Mary French brings the seasons inside—to the gross motor room at the Fairmount Early Intervention Center in Philadelphia



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Giving to others through FSS

Our Thanksgiving program—

Every Thanksgiving we collect turkey “starter kits” with all the fixings from area schools, businesses and individuals. Then we deliver a holiday meal to families in Philadelphia.

Last year we fed 107 families. The Agnes Irwin School gave us 80 complete meals (with turkeys) in bags decorated by the students, the Radnor Elementary School PTO gave us 27 wicker baskets filled to the brim with food, and many other people assembled gifts of fixings like instant mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, canned vegetables, bags of potatoes, cans of pumpkin pie mix, ready made crusts, or cookies & baked goods.

People who didn't have time to shop chose to make cash donations. Their funding sponsored agency purchases of Holiday food for many additional families. To help this Thanksgiving, contact Liz Daly by phone, or by email at LDALY@fssinc.org.

MAKE THEIR LIVES BETTER

“The joy we got by helping ... was far greater than the joy we would have gotten from a few more presents under our tree for ourselves.”—

Dan Webster

Last December two families who were looking for meaningful ways to celebrate their holidays approached Family Support Services with a question. Can you find us a family who needs some unexpected joy in their life; a family with children who have wish lists; a family whose life we can change for the better?

We could, and we did.

We placed a new washer, drier, computer, and toys & clothing in the home of a family with many young children, thanks to William Kozel and Karen Kludjian. And, we arranged for the Webster family to sponsor the holiday wish list of two Philadelphia families with \$600 worth of wrapped gifts. Doing something good for someone else is the best gift of all.

In-kind Giving is handled by Liz Daly

Many of us have more than we need—many of us want to share the goodness in our lives. If this sounds like you, give us a call. Ask for Liz Daly. She'll help you make someone else's holiday great.

Phone: 610-532-7610 Email: LDALY@fssinc.org

Our Holiday Program —

The calls start coming in in late October and early November. That's when we begin organizing our Holiday gift drive.

Liz Daly says “it's heart-warming to see the community come together in such a generous way. The teddy bears are given to the children right away at holiday parties, to cuddle and play with, while the wrapped gifts go home secretly with the parents to be used at more than 200 families' own celebrations.”

Each year Liz collects brand new baby blanket sleepers and clothes, teddy bears, dolls, baby seats, infant & preschool toys, books, hand-made baby quilts, mittens, hats, food gift baskets and more, so that Philadelphia children enrolled in FSS programs will have holiday surprises to enjoy with their parents.

And, the program keeps growing. That's because it is more fun to give, than to receive.