



Judy Center Partnerships

Maryland State Department of Education

Newsletter

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Judith P. Hoyer Foundation Hosts Celebration in Honor of Five Years of Success in Judy Centers

On Friday, September 23, 2005 the Judith P. Hoyer Foundation hosted a gathering to celebrate the five year anniversary of the opening of Maryland's first of twenty-four Judy Centers. Congressman Steny Hoyer and family were joined by distinguished guests, friends and Judy Center Partnership members at the University of MD, University College Inn and Conference Center for a late afternoon celebration. Joining Mr. Hoyer to celebrate this event were daughters, Susan, Stefany, and Anne, State Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Nancy Grasmick, and board members of the Judith P. Hoyer Foundation. During the event two Judy Center Partnerships were awarded \$5,000 each to recognize the 'Most Improved Partnership', and 'Most Innovative Spirit' in Judy Centers.



Above: Geri Thompson, Queen Anne's County Judy Center Coordinator, Attilio Zarrella, Families First Play to Learn Center Director and Dr. Chinnaduraie Davadson, QAC Health Department, are joined by Susan Taylor daughter of Congressman Steny Hoyer, and the late Judith P. Hoyer, and Dr. Nancy Grasmick after accepting the award for Most Innovative Spirit.



Above: Members of the Charles County Judy Center Partnership with Dr. Nancy Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools, and Susan Taylor, daughter of Congressman Steny Hoyer and the late, Judith P. Hoyer, to accept the award for 'Most Improved Partnership'.

This was the first of what the foundation hopes to become an annual affair in honoring the efforts and accomplishments of Judy Centers from around the state. Coordinators and staff members from a number of other Judy Centers were on hand to support their colleagues in this celebration.

The occasion also served to unveil two recently produced videos highlighting Judy Centers as the realization of Judy Hoyer's vision to co-locate educational and other community services for children and families at schools. The Judy P. Hoyer Foundation, Inc. was established to continue Judy Hoyer's legacy by promoting early childhood education and family services through "Family Learning Centers," which have come to be known as Judy Centers.

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Judy Hoyer dedicated her life to improving the lives of young children and their families. Her legacy continues because of the work of the twenty-four Maryland Judy Centers that strive to promote school readiness through the development and expansion of collaborative approaches to the delivery of high quality, comprehensive, full-day, full-year early child care and education programs and family support services.

Washington County Family Center Celebrates 10th Year

The Washington County Family Center, one of twenty-five centers in Maryland's Family Support Network serving families with infants and toddlers, and a partnering agency of the Washington County Judy Center Partnership, opened its doors in 1995. The Family Center, sponsored locally by the Washington County Department of Social Services (WCDSS), offers temporary on-site child care, parent education, developmental screenings for all children, education services, employment skill development, counseling, health education, basic life skills classes and transportation services.

The Family Center is sustained through strong community partnerships beginning with its sponsoring agency, WCDSS, and by including the Washington County Health Department, Washington County Public Schools, Hagerstown Community College, the Cooperative Extension Service, among other agencies. The Washington County Board of County Commissioners has funded the space for the location of the Center since 1995.

The Family Center provides services to expectant parents and families with children under the age of four years. Most families are between the ages of 15 and 26, and many of them are low-income or receive assistance through a variety of social programs, such as WIC, food stamps, or housing. Most are in need of good parenting practices, employment, and self sufficiency skills.

Thus, the mission of the Washington County Family Center is to empower families to become self-sufficient through personal achievement, education



Dave Engle, Director Washington County Department of Social Services, Nicole Houser, Board Chair Department of Social Services, and County Commissioner Greg Snook look on as Karen Christof speaks to friends and guests.

and positive parenting. The Family Center strives to help families meet both the financial and emotional needs of the family members while promoting a nurturing, non-violent home that supports the healthy development of children.

Parents are assisted as they manage competing demands on their time and attention, and supported as they strive to achieve their educational goals.

The Family Center's approach to working with families involves flexibility, individualized programming, understanding of adolescent thinking, realistic goal setting, and respect for the role of the parent.

In 2000, Washington County became one of the first counties to receive a Judith P. Hoyer Early Care and Education (Judy Center) Grant through the Maryland State Department of Education. The Family Center located, in the West End of Hagerstown convenient to several Title I schools, participated in the application, planning and implementation of the original Judy Center grant. Over the past five years, the Judy Center Partnership, located at Bester Elementary School, has supported the Family Center with funding for a full-time childcare position and a part-time case manager. Family literacy, early childhood education and school readiness, all key components of a family support center, were already in place when the concept of the Judy Center was introduced. The complementary nature of the programs made for an easy and natural blending of the two. As a Judy Center Partner, the Family Center ensures that families from the Bester Elementary School area are informed and connected to all available educational services and programs. The Family Center is often the first step for families in the Bester community with very young children entering the education system.

Approximately twenty-five Bester Elementary School families receive services through the Family Center each year, including adult education classes for parents with quality on site child care, parenting education classes, peer support and case management.



Karen Christof, Family Center Director, accepts a plaque from Washington County Commissioner, Greg Snook, for recognition of 10 years of service to children and families in Hagerstown.

MSDE's Accreditation Project Increases Accredited Programs

After five years, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) revised its guidelines for issuing grants to early childhood programs that are pursuing state or national accreditation. In 2005, MSDE updated its standards to incorporate recent research and state initiatives. It also revised the grant guidelines to increase the number of programs receiving funds for program accreditation. With the upcoming round of solicitation early childhood programs, including those, which currently receive Judith Hoyer Enhancement grants, will compete for funds issued by July 1, 2006. The Request for Proposal (RFP) will be issued Friday, January 6, 2006. A copy may be obtained after January 6, 2006, online at www.Marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/division/child_care or electronically by request from Joyce Nixon, Early Childhood Accreditation Facilitator, jnixon1@msde.state.md.us. Applications will be due by Monday, April 3, 2006.

The Early Childhood Accreditation Project was established in August 2000. The task of this project was to increase the number of early child care and education programs completing state or national

program accreditation. The project provides technical assistance, direct support services, and monetary incentives to programs to improve the quality of their services in order to meet national or state program standards.

Maryland has made great strides in increasing the number of accredited programs. At the onset of this project 123 center-based, prekindergarten and kindergarten programs were accredited in the state of Maryland. At that time, no family providers were accredited. To date, 350 new center-based, Head Start, public prekindergarten and kindergarten programs, and 178 family providers have completed a state or national accreditation program.

Accreditation is a process that involves self-appraisal and validation of a program. The process begins with a program team who meets and completes self appraisal using the evaluation instrument, *The Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs*. Next, the team meets to ensure that sufficient program improvements have been made. Finally, trained validators visit the program to verify the accuracy of the self-

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One Man's Ability Leads To Vision Screenings for Thousands Of Maryland Children

Bob Johnson's favorite saying, "Nothing difficult is ever easy", is not to be taken lightly considering that Mr. Johnson has been blind since the age of eight. A visual impairment that Bob was born with in his left eye was not discovered until he began attending kindergarten. An unfortunate misdiagnosis, which did not find the Retinoblastoma in Bob's right eye lead to his permanent blindness by the age of eight. Bob spent his school age years as a resident of the Maryland School for the Blind and at the City School in Baltimore where the smaller class sizes helped him to excel. Finding a long time career in radio, working at three different radio stations in the Baltimore area, Bob learned that he had many abilities and talents. Those abilities and a strong determination served him well. After his successful career in radio he became involved in fundraising and charitable work. That is where Mr. Johnson's partnership with a number of Judy Centers began.

For the past two years, Bob Johnson, and the *Save Our Sight Foundation*, have helped to fund vision screenings and follow up interventions for very young children. Realizing the importance of early screening, detection, and intervention, Mr. Johnson set out to save others from suffering the same fate that caused his blindness.

Since 2004, the *Save Our Sight Foundation* has provided a total of \$38,246 to Judy Centers in Allegany, Garrett, Worcester, Wicomico and Montgomery Counties. Through other partnerships with local vision centers and health departments, thousands of children have benefited by receiving early screening and detection. The *Save Our Sight* funds have helped to provide follow up screening and services, and in some cases the funds for glasses when they were needed.

Judy Center Partnerships are thankful for the generous outreach and contributions made by Bob Johnson and the *Save Our Sight Foundation*.

"The most crucial responsibility of any community is the protection, education and mentoring of its children."
Judith P. Hoyer



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appraisal ratings. A state accreditation decision-making committee makes the final decision for program accreditation. If all standards are met, programs are validated for a period of three years. Programs not meeting all standards are provided technical assistance to achieve the necessary improvements. Young learners, parents, and early care and education programs benefit from national or state accreditation that provides public recognition of a quality early childhood program and improved staff credentials. Accreditation implies that services rendered are beyond the mere licensing and regulatory requirements, represent the highest quality, and reflect research-based best practices in early childhood education.

For more information on how to become accredited by MSDE contact Joyce Nixon at jnixon1@msde.state.md.us or at (410) 767-0335 to order accreditation materials.