

Neighborhood CENTER NEWS

Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County



READING... THE WAY TO A BETTER LIFE

Fall 2004



Literacy is important. It is also the theme for this edition of our newsletter.

We want to make sure that children are successful in school and that adults can provide for their families' needs. These goals guide all of our programs. Literacy, being able to express yourself and understanding others speaking, reading, and writing, is fundamental to finding success in life. Children and adults get literacy support in all of our programs.



Society has proven time and time again that it will reward people who are competent readers and hold back those who are not. This is perhaps best expressed in terms of employment opportunities. Modern workers must be able to adapt to the changing job scene. This often means gathering new skills and knowledge from printed material, whether instruction manuals, computer programs, or classroom training. Skilled jobs require a high level of literacy. Consequently, reading skills are an important factor in predicting an individual's economic success. It will affect income, employment stability and even employment opportunities.



Beyond its practical importance, reading can transform our outlook on life and open a door to a world of wonder. When we lose ourselves in a book, it's like we have transcended our present reality. Reading offers us a chance to broaden our horizons, explore new possibilities and improve our earning capacity. That's a pretty good deal! As Arthur Ashe once said, "Reading is cheap and priceless".

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Neighborhood Centers of
Johnson County
P.O. Box 2491
Iowa City, IA 52244

Phone: 319.358.0438
Fax: 319.358.0484
www.ncjc.org
email: ncjc@ncjc.org

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TALK, TALK, TALK!

You've heard the advice about talking to your children about drugs, smoking... the advice has many applications. But in the context of language development for infants and toddlers the advice is not so much concerned with what you talk about, but rather how much. Research shows that talking to your young child is the major factor in vocabulary growth and verbal intellectual development. (Hart, B & Risley, T.R., 1999 *The Social World of Children Learning to Talk*) And language is the foundation for literacy achievement.



Research also shows that children from different backgrounds typically develop language skills around the same age, the subsequent rate of vocabulary growth is strongly influenced by how much parents talk to their children. Children from professional families (who were found to talk to their children more) gain vocabulary at a quicker rate than their peers in working class and welfare families

At Neighborhood Centers, we agree with Hart & Risley that "the most important thing to evaluate in an child care settings for young children is the amount of talk actually going on." Our staff receive extensive training in supporting children's language development and know that continuous verbal activity - talking singing, humming - will help children build the skills needed to be successful readers. All of us need to remember, when it comes to babies and toddlers follow the experts' advice... talk to children... talk, talk, talk!



*Brian Loring
Executive Director*

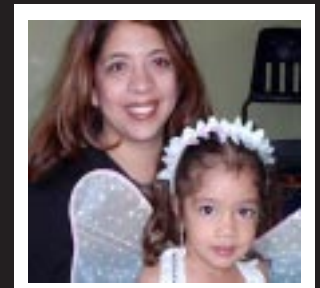


Ramon Ochoa, former Hawkeye football star, helps celebrate National Family Literacy Day® at the Broadway Neighborhood Center by reading to children in Spanish.

GIVING CHILDREN AND PARENTS AN EVEN START

The Even Start Family Literacy Program has been a popular and successful program at the Neighborhood Centers for over 10 years. Even Start maintains the dual goals of increasing literacy development for young children while assisting their parents in reaching their academic goals. Our Even Start program includes all of the following activities:

- Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children.
- Training for parents regarding on how to be an effective primary teacher for their children.
- Parent literacy training (English as Second Language and GED classes) that leads to economic self-sufficiency.
- An age-appropriate, high-quality early childhood education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.



FOCUS ON FOSTER GRANDPARENTS

BABA YOUSIF ROSAMOND

You can usually find Baba Yousif in the preschool classroom at Pheasant Ridge where he reads one-on-one, holds children who need rocking, and provides calm and confident guidance to children who need a little extra support. "I come from a family of educators. It is in our blood," he said. Yousif is 75.



He has 5 daughters and 2 sons, several of whom are also teachers. Yousif said, "I like to work with children because they look at me as a real papa (grandfather), they are glad to see me. I have a chance to influence them in a good way." Yousif is the elder of the local Sudanese community at Pheasant Ridge. He has been in the United States for 14 years and became a citizen 10 years ago. In Sudan, he was very involved in many aspects of the government including the coordination of relief efforts for Sudan and the surrounding area.

The Foster Grandparent program is part of Senior Corps, a network of national service programs that provide older Americans the opportunity to put their life experiences to work for local communities. For more information, call Handicare @ (319)248-2685



Besides becoming a Foster Grandparent for the Pheasant Ridge children, Rosamond's most exciting achievement this year (her 80th) was that she became a U.S. citizen in June and voted for the first time on Nov. 2. Rosamond came to the U.S. from Ghana to visit her children 15 years ago. She ended up staying.

In Ghana, she taught 20 years at the Morning Star School, which has now grown to include university level programs. While there, she taught 3rd grade and preschool, as well as working with a Girl Scout troop. When asked about working at the Center, Rosamond said her favorite things to do includes, "helping the children be happy, making letters out of clay to learn the alphabet, reading to them,

running with them on the playground, and walking hand-in-hand to Fareway singing..." She said, "really, those are just a few of the things!"

BREAKTHROUGH TO LITERACY

Breakthrough To Literacy (BTL) was created by *University of Iowa*, researchers Carolyn Brown and Jerry Zimmermann and based upon their research of young children making the transition from oral language to print. It combines a classroom curriculum with great support for implementation and professional development for teachers. For the past 3 years BTL has offered the Neighborhood Centers their full support in our Broadway and Pheasant Ridge classrooms. Thanks Breakthrough!



programming that includes community-wide, Center-based, and home-based early literacy intervention.

HARKIN ANNOUNCES AWARD FOR NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

In early October, Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) announced that the **Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County** had received a **\$486,000 grant** from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The grant is to fund the for the **Johnson County Early Learning Initiative (JCELI)**. Harkin is the ranking Democrat on the Senate subcommittee that funds health and education

initiatives.

"It is important that Iowa's children receive essential education and health services to ensure that they have the skills to succeed when they start school," **Harkin said**. "This is the type of investment Iowa needs to ensure a brighter economic future for every student."

JCELI targets educational and health outcomes for young children age birth to 5 years and prepares them for a successful school experience. Three primary components are: 1) the "Year to Learn" Community Education Campaign; 2) provider training and support; and 3) Early Childhood Services and Interventions Continuum. JCELI will touch the lives of 250 children and 100 families with



Iowa City IA 52244
P.O. Box 2491

Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County

Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County would like to thank everyone that has invested in children and families...



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