

WEST MIDLAND FAMILY CENTER'S

Family

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ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR AREA RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES

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Special Collaboration Issue of Family Focus

One hallmark of effective human service provision is meaningful collaboration with allied organizations. This form of alliance addresses the needs of service recipients in the most efficient manner by more fully using community resources. The adage: two heads are better than one clearly applies to organizational work. When two or more human service agencies come together their respective recipients reap the benefits. Collaboration generates the development of new ideas and services that one agency alone could not produce.

The summer of 2006 provided WMFC with unique opportunities for collaboration: the most favorable way for human services organizations to conduct business. This issue is dedicated to our collaborative partners and the accomplishments that we realized together.

WMFC and Chippewa Nature Center's Summer Collaboration a BIG Hit!

This summer as in previous summers Chippewa Nature Center and WMFC came together to provide WMFC summer program participants a summertime Grand Finale. But this year things were different. This year's collaboration didn't just provide a finale but filtrated through all aspects of summer program, making for a wonderful outdoor adventure for all involved.



Look...in here, it's a cow!

The program expanded its reach to include weekly visits by Nature Center employee Kelly Huggard who planned activities for preschoolers through 4th graders at the WMFC site. Additionally, all WMFC group leaders were trained by Nature Center staff members to lead nature activities when Kelly wasn't there. Equipped with a Nature Resource Kit, WMFC staff members became naturalists in their own right with summer program participants as eager learners. To their benefit kids got a triple dose of nature appreciation this summer!

Another exciting result of this summer's WMFC/Chippewa Nature Center collaboration is the Diane Dauer Memorial Garden (a work in progress). Calling upon Nature Center expertise, WMFC staff members and summer program participants began planting the garden using hearty native

plants. Upon completion, this "Butterfly Garden" will draw butterflies and other native creatures into our midst. As part of the project kids made toad houses and stepping-stones to adorn the garden. Located just outside of the north preschool classroom the garden will serve as an excellent learning environment for years to come.

Thanks to Midland Kiwanis Foundation who paid for staffing, transportation, and supplies, 50 WMFC children were also able to spend two fun-filled days at the Nature Center where they played and learned like children did over 100 years ago: Froggin,' milkin' cows, feeding apples to the pigs, making rope and climbing hay bales in the barn. Lunch was eaten in the grass while birds and cicadas chirred overhead. Seeing our children engaged in such pursuits gave a glimpse back to a time when children made their own fun using materials that



Connor, Jenna, Courtney and Group Leader Kayla making candles.

were found and provided by nature. Dressed in 1870's attire our kids could easily have been mistaken for children of another era: learning ~ having fun, gaining respect for the out of doors with activities of a bygone age.



Nothing more fun than froggin.'



Kayla and Brandon planting.

MSU Cooperative Extension & WMFC join forces in The Family Garden Project

West Midland teamed up with the Michigan State University Cooperative Extension to deliver an exciting new program ideally suited for summer and families. This program was funded through grant dollars procured by Midland County Cooperative Extension. The Community Family Garden Project began in April and ran through August. Over the course of these four months families plotted their garden, planted, nurtured, tended

and learned new skills. Families learned how to deal with invasive pests, learned how to prepare nutritious meals using the fresh foods they produced, and learned how to store food for the winter months. Ten families took part in this project, the goal of which was to provide families with skills to independently garden in the future. An end-of-summer family picnic celebrated the many accomplishments realized by the families.



Victoria hard at work.

Shelterhouse, WMFC, United Way Women's Initiative and Camp Neyati Collaborate for Women and Children



Parachuting at Neyati.

In the spring of 2006, Shelterhouse and WMFC were awarded a United Way Women's Initiative grant, which among other things supported a weekend family retreat for mothers and their children "Camp Retreat and Rebuild."

This retreat took place at Camp Neyati June 30-July 2, 2006, with twenty-three families registered for this weekend adventure. During camp families were rejuvenated by education, fun and relaxation. The weekend retreat was an opportunity for women to rebuild and children to play and have fun. With the support of other women, participants were exposed to new ideas, they learned new things, made new friendships, relaxed and rekindle bonds with their children. At the same time, children were redirected, relaxed and calmed down.

This program was educational and fun, designed to enhance the family services they already receive at WMFC or Shelterhouse and designed to enhance family harmony. While our intention was to equip moms and children with education to ease the burdens they face, we were equally determined that Camp Retreat & Rebuild and its resulting program benefits would be the respite these families so desperately need to move on. The focus of the weekend was to raise the women's self-esteem so they will parent with confidence. The benefits and ancillary programming of this grant will carry over throughout the year. In addition to the Neyati camping experience, the grant affords WMFC and Shelterhouse other opportunities for collaboration.

An added benefit of this grant was that WMFC was able to provide free Summer Program participation for all children referred by the Shelterhouse. Eighteen children with family involvement at Shelterhouse were transported to WMFC where they enjoyed the joys of summer along with all the other children. Additionally, Shelterhouse staff members have become involved in the WMFC "Moment Making Mondays" parenting group where they will be facilitating the Kid's Club/Mom's Club to mothers and children with Domestic Violence issues. Their on-going presence at WMFC will be an added incentive for women to come forward and seek help.

Community Support Leads to An Extraordinary Journey Across Michigan

This spring the community rallied around Dow COP director Lynn Heil as she made plans to take the Dow COP freshmen and sophomores on the 270 mile PALM (Pedal Across Lower Michigan) Bicycle Ride. This was an extraordinary adventure that was indeed life changing, made possible through the generosity of many community members. Upon returning home, Lynn said, "I have lead many trips through the Dow College Opportunity Program and in previous work, but this biking trip was the most powerful experience I have ever shared with kids."



Aiyana and Whitney - camping out.

This trip and the training behind it led the kids to immeasurable experiential learning and personal growth. Students learned everything from how to ride bikes safely and skillfully to bicycle mechanics and teamwork. They gained the knowledge that

even when they think they can't, they can. They became self-reliant and skilled in relating to adults and learned that their bodies are strong and capable.

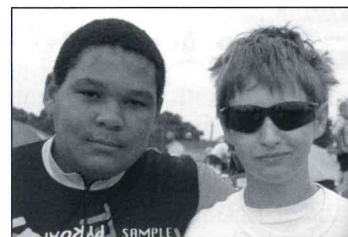
The PALM was unlike anything that the COP participants had ever experienced. Not only were they challenged to push themselves past previously understood personal physical boundaries but they were also met with a diversity of individual characters. Everywhere they looked there were

many people—sisters in matching custom-made jerseys, people with stuffed cows on their helmets, recumbent riders with whirligigs flying behind them. Everywhere there were people smiling! It was a carnival to which the COP students quickly acclimated.



COP students heading east on their 270 mile journey across the state.

There were nightly informational meetings and each evening the kids swam and completed last minute bike repairs and adjustments. In the morning they were off along with 700—800 other riders. The kids were minor celebrities on the tour—everyone wanted to know about the COP group and if they were having fun. All COP team members wore matching shirts and as such Lynn received regular reports and feedback on how the kids were doing. She commented, "Compliments came from every corner—what good kids, how nice they were, how good they were at helping each other out." One PALM official made a special point to call Lynn to praise a group of teens he met who were working diligently to fix a troublesome flat tire.



Jacob and Justin - contemplate the road ahead.

What a rare once in a lifetime opportunity. Congratulations COP Freshmen and sophomores thanks for shining a bright light on WMFC with your exemplary attitudes and outstanding behavior.

West Midland FAMILY FACES



Amanda

Amanda ~ is a senior at Coleman High School with her sights set on success. Amanda is a member of the Dow College Opportunity Program with a grade point average of 3.8. After diligent studying, she received a 31 on her ACT (out of a possible 36)! This is a score to be proud of and one that will open many doors for her. Amanda is considering a career as a midwife, with medical training and is interested in attending Kalamazoo College. She is a member of National Honor Society, is active in student government and is a talented artist. She works at A&W and hopes to one day have a chance to study abroad.



Britney

Britney ~ has been a member of the WMFC Junior Lifeguard team since the program was launched five years ago. Britney has been working along side the lifeguards each summer since she began this program. This past summer each Junior Lifeguard was paired with a Guard who personally mentored them. Britney plans to take her lifeguard certification training this fall and will be working as a lifeguard in the summer of 2007. Renee Allen, Aquatics Director, feels Britney is the

essence of this program's intent. "She is mature and well spoken and I'm really looking forward to having her as a part of the aquatics staff." Britney is in 11th grade at Bullock Creek High School.



Rose

Rose ~ and her aide Priscilla are regular guests at WMFC preschool. For many years, Rose has been coming in weekly to read to the children. It matters not what the subject is, the children are always fully engaged in whatever selection Rose has chosen. Whether lands far away, funny little creatures or princes and princesses children love hearing Rose read. Each day the children ask "Is this the day that Rose comes?" Her dedication is remarkable. Preschool teacher Wendy Plewa commented "Rose never misses a week, even if she may not feel up to it or the weather is bleak she is always here ready to share her love of children and reading."



Charlie

Charlie the Dog ~ is a member of the Center's maintenance team and can be found on the heels of Maintenance Director, Jeff

Myers or... curled up in a corner of the maintenance garage. Please note: he is the only member of the Center's staff encouraged to sleep on the job! Charlie serves as the Center's good will ambassador delivering smiles to children and seniors alike. He has much in common with our preschoolers and enjoys performing for them. He can count. When asked, he will tell you that he is four, he can STOP! DROP! & ROLL!, he knows his right from his left, he salutes and gives high-fives.



Brenda

Brenda ~ is a member of the Dow College Opportunity Program (COP) with a very charitable spirit. Consistently, Brenda wins COP accolades for devoting the most number of hours to volunteer activities. This year she devoted 189 hours to various volunteer endeavors. Brenda attends Shepherd High School where she is a junior. Brenda tutors, volunteers at the Shepherd Maple Syrup Festival, was a summer camp volunteer, participates in COP volunteer activities, she spreads cheer, visits patients and helps with special events at a Mt. Pleasant medical care facility. She is part of the Job's Daughters organization, sings in her high school choir, works at McDonald's and has participated in many school clubs.



Diane Dauer

The Ernie Wallace Memorial Blood Band and WMFC
ANNOUNCE

The DIANE DAUER MEMORIAL BLOOD DRIVE

DATE: Monday October 16, 2006

TIME: 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

LOCATION: WMFC North Parking Lot.

Look for the big Ernie Wallace Mobile Blood Center Bus.
Call WMFC for an appointment or just drop by during drive hours to donate.

Do it in honor of Diane's gentle spirit. Do it because it's the right thing to do.....

In the Mid-Michigan area alone 140 pints of blood are needed each day simply to provide for standard hospital needs.

Give the gift of life in honor of Diane. Help to make this the best blood drive WMFC has ever hosted.

Simple things that we take for granted are a blessing in the life of another ~ one mom grateful to have received a well-maintained vehicle.

August 3, 2006

Dear Renee,

My children and I can't even begin to express how happy you have made us and how thankful we are for the gracious gift you have given us. For the first time in years, we have a radio, our vehicle is all one color, the windows roll up so we won't get wet, the wipers work, we have a horn for safety, and all of us can now be seatbelted in safety. Wow! What a true blessing and a miracle that has come true.

Please Give our utmost "thank you" to the donator of the vehicle as our family will be forever grateful. I can now look in a rear-view mirror that I did not have before and see a smile on my children's face. They are no longer embarrassed. They are VERY PROUD! Love

Look For These Friendly Faces At WMFC



Board of Directors:

Board President.....Bob Dostal
Vice PresidentLarry Reeves
SecretaryE.J. Herst
Treasurer.....Carl Coons

Directors: Ashley Barriger, Rod Dishaw, Bo Miller,
Nate Ohle, Bev Ruttan, Cheryl VanConant,
Joe VanderKelen

Advisors: Greg Bergtold, Phyllis Breedlove,
Jim Burlingame, Ben Dollard, Thomas Misner,
Chuck Norisez, Alan Oman, Dave Pellegrom,
Jerry Schaar, William Schmidt, Mike Skurski,
Win Zacharias

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Director of ProgramsGail Crosby
Financial DirectorJason Green
Office ManagerDiane DeMott
Administrative AssistantMissy Finney
ReceptionistsChristy Chappel, Tiarra Fort
New Initiatives CoordinatorSusan Love

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Maintenance Director.....Jeff Myers
Maintenance StaffGerald Burkett, Jennifer Haley,
Mike Kirby, Ryan Pederson,
Charlie LeDog

Family Development Staff:

Family Services DirectorRenee Young
Family ConsultantLois Burton
Catholic Family Services.....Larry Quinn

Early Childhood Staff:

Preschool TeachersClara Harrand, Wendy Plewa
Preschool StaffEileen Burch, Kathy Boulis,
Diana Laporta, Penny Owens,
Sheleigh Nicolai, Marcy Young
Kinder Kare Site DirectorMelina VanConant
Kinder Kare Staff.....Liz Moore, Tammy Moore,
Sheena Spyker, Eva Searfoss,
Katie Shellnut

Youth & Teen Staff:

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Dow College Opportunities Program Director..Lynn Heil
Teen Program DirectorStacey Urbani
Youth and Teen Staff ..Erin Birdsall, Casey Dewar,
Mary DeSchryver, Michell Duffey,
Mark Foley, Colleen Foy,
Tiffany Grinnell, Mike Hall,
Angela Hayner, Danielle Ismirle,
Jennifer Justice, Derek Ledwidge,
Shannon McCann, Danielle Roberts,
Tyrell Ross, Tammy Screws,
Joe Spencer, Jeff Tanner,
Alaina Waldman

Activities and Instruction Staff:

Recreation & Aquatics Director.....Renee Allen
Computer Class TeacherPeggy Hoff

Senior Program Staff:

WMFC Senior Program Staff.....Susan Wells
Council on Aging Site ManagerTammy Jerome
Council on Aging StaffSandra Engle, Barb Fenby,
Marsha Orwig

• Each staff member is listed only once although many serve multiple roles at the center.