

# Family Focus

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 1

*Thriving, Giving, Growing ... Together*

WINTER 2014

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## Forty Years of Family! WMFC Celebrates 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on July 31<sup>st</sup>



Forty years is a long time. Much can be accomplished in such a span. In that amount of time families grow and change. Dramatically. Indeed, babies mature from infancy to adulthood in 40 years, so too has **West Midland Family Center (WMFC)**. In 1974, with the old

Greendale School standing empty, concerned community members came together to address the lack of a convening place for their teens. These dedicated individuals renovated Greendale School #4 and created a gathering place for this community's young people. That was the seed,

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*Midland Rotary Foundation recently purchased iPads for all WMFC Preschool Classrooms*

## Midland Rotary Foundation Invests in Preschool Students

**Midland Rotary Foundation** recently partnered with WMFC to purchase iPads for each of WMFC's eight preschool classrooms. The iPads will be used as teaching tools to provide various classroom enhancements. As developments

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## St. John's Episcopal Church Assists with Computer Lab Upgrade

West Midland Family Center (WMFC) recently received funding from the **St. John's Episcopal Church Endowment Committee** in the amount of \$3,000. With these funds, St. John's Episcopal provides the people of our community with easy access to updated technology (something lacking in low-income homes.) The funds received have been used to purchase five desktop computers replacing the outdated computers - vintage 2006.

Key goals of WMFC include educating, individuals and ending generational poverty. To that end, the new computer lab is used by individuals to take on-line college courses, pay bills, keep in touch with family members or file unemployment claims. Children use

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## Dorrien Reflects on Change

*OPPORTUNITY* is my first thought when I hear the word “bussing.” Although, maybe it should be *repair bills* since any “new” bus that **West Midland Family Center (WMFC)** buys comes with at least 150,000 miles. But no, opportunity is still my first thought. Primarily because I’m an optimist...and also because I’m not the guy with the cold wrench in his hand!

Back when WMFC had very few resources we didn’t provide transportation. As a result, we could count on only about 30 children showing up daily for our summer program. At that time parents would say, “If you give my children transportation they can attend.” These parents were working, or couldn’t afford the gas, they didn’t have a car, or a driver’s license.... there were countless reasons that parents could not get their children to the Center. So we went forward and began providing transportation to those in need. However, as soon as we did that, we had many new questions to answer. Foremost: “What do we *do* with 200 summer program participants a day?”

Last year the **Midland Area Community Foundation** completed a community needs assessment. Every focus group involved in that assessment highlighted transportation as an area of concern. The transportation service gap was so predominant that the Midland Area Community Foundation designated *transportation needs* as one of 13 areas of emphasis.

I concur. At this time, WMFC owns six busses that seat a total of 198 people, and four vans that seat 45 people. In addition, we have wonderful relationships with the **Bullock Creek School** system and

**County Connection** both of which have provided us compensated and uncompensated service for many years. Today, in one way or another, transportation is provided for those in our parent education, preschool, **The Dow College Opportunity**, after school and summer programs, along with senior citizen and emergency family services. Tens of thousands of people have benefited from transportation services over the years.

Generational poverty has changed for hundreds of families. First generation college students call WMFC their second home. I’m just not sure if this would have happened on this great scale had we not started offering transportation. **Charles Infante**, (Dow Chemical Company’s Corporate Contributions Officer when we built the new WMFC) always said, “*people solve problems, money helps.*” I’d like to take this opportunity to thank all the people (the problem-solvers) who helped West Midland Family Center arise, excel and mature thus creating an opportunity-rich community for all its citizens.



WMFC Executive Director, Greg Dorrien,  
with Big Red



Sharing Tree Gifts Bring Smiles to 587 Faces

## 850 Holidays Brightened

During the past holiday season our **Family Services Department** assisted by **other organizations, businesses, individuals, and volunteers** brought smiles and warmth to 850 deserving area residents. **The United Way’s Sharing Tree Program** assured 587 people that someone was thinking of them by providing gifts with an estimated value of \$41,045.

The **WMFC Holiday Help Program** satisfied the particular needs of another 224 individuals (50 families.) Another 39 individuals received emergency assistance in the form of propane, vehicle repairs, energy bills, rent, water heater repairs, etc.

Special thanks to our **Dow College Opportunity Program** students. Their shopping expertise, combined with their youthful cultural knowledge, led to Christmas morning shouts of glee that reverberate in our hearts. We hope the children from those 25 recipient families follow your lead and pay it forward in another decade.



## St. John's Episcopal Upgrades Computer Lab

...continued on page 1

the lab to do homework and research. Meanwhile as individual family members come to the Center for computer access, they begin to connect with WMFC staff members along with other services and activities provided here. As such, the lab provides a valuable point of entry for community members unaware of the many family services and recreational activities open to them.

WMFC is proud to have St. John's Episcopal Church "on-board" with us in support of this valuable service to the West Midland community.



## WMFC Celebrates 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on July 31<sup>st</sup>

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provided with love, out of concern.

With baby steps, the former **West Midland County Community Center (WMCCC)** developed preschool, youth and adult activities. The Greendale Happy Diners were welcomed aboard, and WMCCC was off to a sound beginning. The addition of every new program encouraged the participation of someone new. One by one our family grew: One person, one family at a time.

Over 40 years WMFC has become the hub of activity for West Midland

County. Literally thousands of individuals from hundreds of families are served each year from tiny babies to elderly community members. Programs and services now range from parent education, to sports leagues, childcare, to college readiness. Independently, but in collaboration with other organizations and generous supporters, WMFC provides for the needs of this community.

While celebrating our roots, WMFC eagerly looks ahead to the next 40 years. In doing so, the WMFC staff and board members invite you, our faithful followers to join with us in celebration of West Midland Family Center's **FORTY YEARS OF FAMILY**. Mark your calendar for Thursday, July 31, 2014 and plan to attend our anniversary celebration. Watch for details in coming months.



## Volunteer Spotlight - Jeff Henning, *Nightlife Entertainment*

**Jeff Henning** is the owner of **Nightlife Entertainment** and an exceptional professional deejay/emcee. Jeff has partnered with WMFC in the last year by providing his services free of charge as a deejay, for our Parent Date Nights.

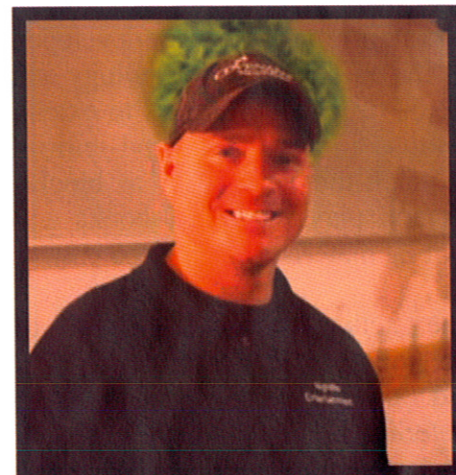
Parent Date Nights were developed to offer WMFC parents the opportunity to slow down. Couples focus on their relationship which often becomes secondary to the parental responsibilities and economic stressors that they face. During Parent Date Nights, parents are allowed time to nurture their relationship in a romantic atmosphere, which in turn benefits

the children at home. Jeff plays a special role in our Parent Date Nights. He arrives at the Center, loads and unloads all of his equipment, sets his equipment up, and then provides the participants with a fantastic array of music, mood, and fun. He also helps the staff emcee the various games and activities that take place during the evening.

Jeff's positive attitude and infectious energy help to make each date night a truly memorable event for the moms and dads in attendance.

We are so very grateful for Jeff. His willingness to give back to the

community by sharing his time, talents and treasures is a benefit to us all.



Jeff Henning, *Nightlife Entertainment*





*West Midland Family Center...  
always making a difference*

## Midland Rotary Foundation Invests in Preschool Students...continued from page 1

in technology continue to move forward so does the need to educate students in ways that will ready them for the world and enable them to best navigate their future.

The **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAECA)** believes that young children need opportunities to develop the early technology handling skills associated with early digital literacy. It is recommended that basic skills in technology operations and concepts be developed by the age of five. Technology and media offer opportunities to extend learning in early childhood settings in much the same way as blocks, art and play materials, books and writing materials have in the past.

The active, appropriate use of technology and media can support and extend traditional learning materials in valuable ways. Use of iPads will introduce children to basic

concepts of research and reinforce curiosity. This is important in part because many of these children do not have access to technology at home.

Educators have found that program applications or “apps,” downloaded to an iPad, can help support many different types of preschool learners thus resulting in excellent learning alternatives for all children. As an example, to help develop literacy skills there are several handwriting “apps” in which children use their fingers to trace letters and learn the alphabet, or they trace using a stylus that looks like a pencil.

Other exciting uses for the iPads include downloading music to be played at group time where music and movement are an integral component of the curriculum. iPads can also be used for impromptu still shots and videos of the children to share with families. iPads will also

be useful in allowing teachers to enter assessment notes immediately while working with the children which will provide for more accurate assessments of children. In turn, this will provide teachers with more time to devote to children because they will not have to spend time transcribing hand written notes.

Benjamin Franklin once said, “an investment in knowledge pays the best interest.” WMFC would like to thank the Midland Rotary Foundation for investing in the future of our children!



*WMFC Associate Preschool Teacher Amie  
Neubecker shows children how to use an iPad*

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 Kenneth E. Livernois\*  
 Jim Burlingame\*  
 Eleanor Barrett\*  
 Win Zacharias\*  
 Anonymous  
 Carl Coons

\* Deceased

*To the best of our knowledge, this listing is accurate as of publication. However...if you find you have been erroneously placed on our anonymous donor's list, please contact us!*