

Family Focus

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Thriving, Giving, Growing ... Together

Fall 2014

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Center Provides Families with Tools of Empowerment

This piece entitled "Center Provides Families With Tools of Empowerment" by Malachi Barrett is an excerpt of an article originally printed from the September 15, 2014 issue of The Morning Sun.

For 40 years, the West Midland Family Center has offered programs designated to strengthen families and protect children of all ages. The

WMFC was established in 1974 as a result of the community's concern for its young people. Since then, the WMFC has evolved from the old Greendale School that housed the original West Midland Community Center to the 37,000 square foot facility we know today; growing to include programs located at various sites throughout Midland County and Shepherd.

"By helping parents to address issues pro-actively, WMFC provides all the tools families need to be successful," said **Susan Love, New Initiatives and Promotions Director**. "This is accomplished by assuring that basic family needs are met, educating parents in all things from growing their own food, to budgeting their money to providing discipline for their children."

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Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation Challenge Grant Progress

Faithful *Family Focus* readers will remember that we announced that **The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation** graciously provided WMFC with a \$300,000 challenge grant. The challenging part is they give us a \$1 donation only when we collect \$1 from other individual donors/businesses. The Foundation had two goals for this challenge grant:

- 1.) To make known WMFC's mission thereby generating support among potential new donors.
- 2.) To help assure the success of WMFC efforts working with area families

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WMFC Acknowledges Outstanding Volunteers

WMFC is pleased to announce the 2014 **Phyllis Breedlove Friend of the Center**, **Steve Barstow Youth Volunteer of the Year** and the **Orrin Barrett Volunteer of the Year** awards.

Please turn to page three to read about these wonderful recipients.

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Center Provides Families with Tools of Empowerment ...continued from page 1



I really liked what WMFC does and how they help people," commented Marcella Vasquez

WMFC provides services to help eliminate family stress including many programs to assist parents with the challenges of raising a family. This is why **Shannon and Andy Granger** brought their son Nathan to preschool. Their two grown daughters had moved out, making Nathan essentially an only child. The Grangers wanted their son to have social interaction with children his age. "This is exactly what we wanted for him as far as developing social skills," Andy said.

"When we talked to the WMFC preschool teachers, they told us they would focus in on that and they did. They did what they said they would do and you don't find that very often anymore." Aside from school they took advantage of some of the other vast range of programs available, like parenting classes, free summer field trips and even parent date nights. Shannon said that they couldn't be more happy with the services, she would recommend it to anyone. ...continued on page 4

Grant Update

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At this writing we have collected \$235,000 in contributions toward the challenge grant. This represents gifts from 437 donors - 83 of them new donors (Foundation goal #1). We see this as an outpouring of love provided by generous area residents, even some who have relocated to warmer climates! Paired with long-time donors, new donors strengthen our organization to meet current needs and future growth.

Countless unknown factors come into play associated with an individual's ability to contribute. One thing we do know is that our donor base has been diminished as stalwart contributors have passed away. That said, one heartwarming trend we hope to see continue is the increase in donors who donate *In honor of/for In memory of* a friend or loved one. The February 2015 issue of the Family Focus will include a list of all our donors, including those who have given *In honor of/In memory of* gifts. Each year this list grows, as does our gratitude for the blessing bestowed unto our community

As we enter the homestretch we feel compelled to promote a solid finish. With the donation of every dollar our community of supporters helps to assure the success of WMFC families...the second goal set forth by The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation.

Trebuchet Launches STEM Learning

The **Midland Center for the Arts** recently held a "Pumpkin Chuckin" event at the **Midland County Fairgrounds**. The **Dow College Opportunity Program (Dow COP)** students were invited to compete in the event. The students, always ready to accept any challenge that is placed before them, couldn't wait to get started!

Over various meetings, the students, and **Dow COP Program Director Mike Sobolewski**, discussed the technology involved in each type of siege machine; catapults, slingshots, and trebuchets, and the different designs available. After much discussion the group decided to build a trebuchet machine.

"While building their trebuchet machine the students quickly learned there was a lot of math and science to consider if they were going to be successful in getting their pumpkins to fly," explained Sobolewski. Students had to consider such

things as counterweight, release angle and the length of the sling and the throwing arm. Using a virtual physics modulator, students fine-tuned their plans before construction of their machine began.

During the contest, watching the other machines in action allowed the students to observe how pivot, throwing arm length and the position of the counterweight, can affect the distance that a pumpkin is thrown. As a result, the students came away with lots of ideas for what could be added to their future designs. Until then, WMFC will use this year's machine to inspire all the children who attend WMFC to show them how much fun science, technology, engineering and math can be!

We would like to thank Bill and Nancy of Lang Tool Company for purchasing the materials of the trebuchet and paying for the Pumpkin Chuckin entry fee.



A **trebuchet** is a type of catapult that was used as a siege engine in the Middle Ages. Dow COP students incorporated many **STEM** (Science, Technology Engineering and Math) concepts into building their own trebuchet. Their "Pumpkin Chuckin Machine" threw an 8 lb. pumpkin 210 feet (of which 120 was vertical!)...all of which leads the DOW COP students back to the drawing board to solve the mystery of defeating gravity.

WMFC Acknowledges Outstanding Volunteers



Dave and Lisa McCray
Phyllis Breedlove
Friends of the Center

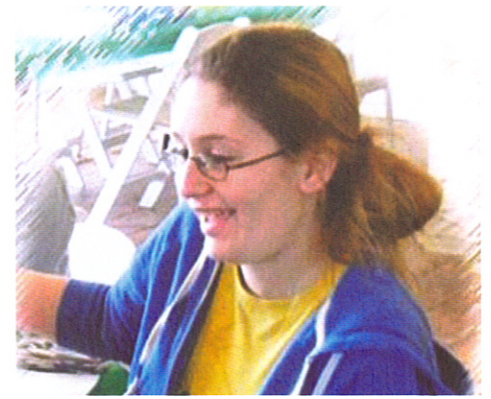
According to **Stacey Urbani, WMFC Recreation Director**, “**Dave and Lisa McCray** are very special volunteers - unique in that they may not even consider themselves to be volunteers. As they go about participating at WMFC, they act out of the kindness of their hearts. When they see a need they fill it. They are both very compassionate people who use their positive perspectives to see the potential and good in others.” Due to Dave’s involvement with WMFC basketball numerous players have been mentored/befriended and become a part of something bigger than basketball. Lisa has achieved a similar sense of community within the Zumba classes offered at WMFC. In class, Lisa recognized that the women participants needed additional support to make fitness a habit. Lisa began a dialogue with the Zumba class members that blossomed into extra work out time with specific people. Once again the sense of community was born inside a program. Dave and Lisa are extraordinary individuals - truly **PHYLLIS BREEDLOVE FRIENDS OF THE CENTER** making a difference every day. WMFC is blessed to have Dave and Lisa on our team!



Jeff Henning,
Nightlife Entertainment
Orrin Barrett
Volunteer of the Year

Jeff Henning, Nightlife Entertainment deejay, has volunteered at every one of WMFC date nights as well as the recent 40th Anniversary Celebration. “We fell in love with Jeff at the very first date night. His great attitude and warm smile helps to put parents at ease and coaxes them out onto the dance floor. We were thrilled at the end of that first evening when Jeff said to call him in the future if he could help again,” stated **Gail Crosby, WMFC Connect and Serve Coordinator**.

Jeff is a staunch supporter of everything that WMFC is trying to accomplish, including, bringing parents together to focus on their relationships, which in turn strengthens their marriage and makes their home a happier, healthier place for the children to be raised. As proof of his commitment, Jeff drives 80 miles round-trip from his home in Saginaw to participate at WMFC. Jeff is the epitome of dedication and is highly deserving of the **ORRIN BARRETT - VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR** recognition. WMFC families are fortunate to reap the benefits of his allegiance.



Toni Jones
Steve Barstow
Youth Volunteer of the Year

Toni Jones is in 11th grade at **Bullock Creek High School**. She has been a member of the **Dow College Opportunity Program (COP)** for just over two years. Part of the mission of COP is to promote community engagement and Toni is an outstanding example of a young person putting her community first. In the two plus years of Toni’s COP involvement she has volunteered 171 hours within the West Midland community and beyond. She has spent many hours volunteering for the WMFC childcare during various family service events. She has also participated in many COP service projects. Toni demonstrates to the community how much WMFC cares through her keen volunteer ethic. Her responsible, hardworking nature helps to ensure the successful outcome of many WMFC events and programs. According to **Mike Sobolewski, Dow COP Director** “Toni enjoys helping others and volunteering within her community and she does so with little to no recognition. Her altruistic approach to giving, sets Toni apart from her peers, and makes her deserving to be recognized as the **STEVE BARSTOW YOUTH VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR.**”



"Dow COP Students Dani (left) and Brittany (right) using their STEM skills in measuring and designing the trebuchet frame."

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Center Provides Families with Tools of Empowerment

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Through WMFC, individuals and family members access a multitude of family enrichment services including individual and family counseling, parent education, emergency assistance for clothing or food, childcare, after-school and summer programs and many more.

Love said the **Dow College Opportunity Program** was founded in 1989 to help break the cycle of poverty and lack of higher education in surrounding counties. Students from Shepherd, Bullock Creek, Meridian and Coleman high schools gain a variety of academic and social skills through the mentoring program designed to help them get into and succeed in college. Students like **Cymanthia Smith** were mentored throughout their college years increasing their success rate. She was the first in her family to go to college, though she said she couldn't have done it without the preparation given to her by the WMFC.

"We took a trip junior year to visit colleges we were interested in,

which was great because my family couldn't have afforded to travel and see them," Smith said. "If I hadn't been in the program I wouldn't have found the college I went to." In the Spring, she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from **Hiram College** in Ohio. Smith plans to find work in research and then get her Master's degree.

Marcella Vasquez was also helped along her college journey. A junior at **Central Michigan University**, she needed volunteer hours for her Family Studies Major. Vasquez recently helped out with the WMFC family camp at **Camp Neyati** in Lake. "I really liked what they do and how they help people," she said. "I got a chance to go to camp and work with kids who wouldn't have access to the resources that they provide, it was awesome." The Center's research-validated programs are facilitated by professional staff members and are educationally based and socially appealing.