

West Midland Family Center's

Family FOCUS



Enhancing the Quality of Life for Area Residents of all ages

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The E.J. Herst Story - From Preschool Dad To Board President

I've been a member of the WMFC Board of Directors for six years. I was drawn to this organization while my oldest daughter, Mikayla was in preschool. At that time I witnessed the impact that the WMFC Preschool program has in the lives of children and their families. As my wife Jill and I volunteered in the classroom, we learned that the program is so much more than a venue to increase academic readiness. Although a member of the West Midland community, I saw for the first time the pervasive poverty that dictates the lives of so many of these little children.

Over time, and through my participation in Parent and Family Nights, I realized that WMFC has really "stepped up to the plate," providing a full spectrum of human services to these families. I was surprised to learn that the human services model and wrap-around assistance is not limited to the preschool families. Any individual or family that participates in WMFC programs is eligible for a number of support services. I am indeed bought into the excellent education provided at the Center but it is the shared "heart" that makes WMFC such a special place. When the time came we jumped at the opportunity to enroll our other children, Callen, Maxton and Jacey in the WMFC preschool. Jill and I have been actively involved ever since.



WMFC Board President, E.J. Herst

I did wonder how a non-profit organization was able to provide such a vast array of services. Through my involvement on the WMFC Board I've learned that it isn't easy. It's a constant struggle to maintain a balanced budget and provide the services that are desperately needed by the families. A combination of creative fund raising strategies and unsurpassed staff dedication go a long way to make ends meet. However, I've come to

truly value donors and the army of community volunteers as the bedrock of this unique non-profit organization. Often I think that people minimize the impact of their contribution, be it in the form of a check or in their gift of time. They give because they are called to do so, because it's the right thing to do, because they care or because it's the end of the year. What motivates them to give is unimportant.

But I suspect however, that contributors rarely consider that when they enroll in this "Family of Donors," they protect programs that protect our community's children and elderly. Donor contributions keep Center staff from having to make the impossible decision between cutting one child's program over another. Especially in times such as these, the value of every contribution is all the more significant. So I thank our benefactors for the sustaining power of pooled resources and demonstrated spirit of community.

I look forward to my tenure as Board President, working with the other Board volunteers and meeting the challenges I know we will face together.

Photo courtesy of Mikayla Herst.

Weiler, Bowen and Dollard Round Out New WMFC Board

West Midland Family Center is proud to announce the selection of new board members. At the January 4, 2010 meeting of the WMFC Board of Directors, Sally Bowen and Ben Dollard were instated as members of the WMFC Board while Joe Weiler was instated at the May 4th, 2009 board meeting. Each was elected to a three-year term. We are happy to welcome E.J. Herst as the new President of the Board. E.J. replaces Larry Reeves who gave us six years of dedicated service.



Joe Weiler

Joe Weiler: Joe was raised in Ohio and attended Ohio University where he received his Bachelor of Science degree in 2003. Joe

received his Juris Doctor, in 2007 from Michigan State University College of Law and a Master of Laws (LL.M.) in Taxation, 2008 from Wayne State University Law School. Joe moved to Midland in 2008 and began working at Currie Kendall PLC, where he specializes in estate planning, probate and trust administration, tax law, business and

elder law. In his two short years as a resident, Joe has fully engaged in the Midland community. In addition to being on the WMFC Board, Joe provides pro bono legal counsel for Midland Area Homes, he is a member of the Midland Morning Rotary Club and volunteers for United Way of Midland County's "Ask the Lawyer" program. He is a member of the Midland County Bar Association and Midland's Young Professionals. Joe is also a member of the State Bar of Michigan, the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys and Northeastern Michigan Estate Planning Council. Joe enjoys sports, cooking and spending time with his wife Radha.

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Weiler, Bowen and Dollard.... Continued from page 1

Joe appreciates being part of the West Midland family and he is a strong advocate of the "Family Center" concept which provides under-served families and individuals the chance to succeed and belong.



Sally Bowen

Sally Bowen: Sally grew up in Detroit and graduated from Wayne State University. When her children were young she began her service with non-profit organizations as a Board Member for United Way

of Southeast Michigan and the statewide association of Michigan's United Way organizations. Since moving to the mid-Michigan area in the late 1970s she has continued her service with non-profit organizations. She served on the United Way Board of Directors of Saginaw County as well as Midland County's Family and Children's Services, Voluntary Action Center and Literacy Council. She has also served in leadership positions with Leadership Midland, the Leader-

ship Midland Alumni Association as well as with Youth Leadership.

Her professional focus has mainly been on academic fundraising, having worked for Northwood University and Alma College in a variety of fundraising and institutional development positions. She has also done fundraising for the Girl Scouts, several United Way organizations and various agencies in Midland County.

Sally learned about the West Midland Family Center while participating in Leadership Midland. She appreciates the important impact of the Center..... especially on children and youth. She looks forward to serving on the Board of Directors and hopes her fundraising experience will be useful to the Center

Sally and her husband Bill have two grown sons, David and Bob.

Ben Dollard: Ben returns to the WMFC Board after a six year hiatus. He has remained very active at the Center through his participation in the Dow College Opportunity Program where he has served for 14 years as a member of that board. Ben was raised in Alma and attended Alma College where



Ben Dollard

he received a Bachelor of Arts degree. Ben moved to Midland in 1992 to start his career for Ameriprise Financial as a Chartered Retirement Planning Counselor. His specialties are retirement planning, asset allocation analysis, and financial projections. In addition to

his involvement at WMFC, Ben is involved with the Midland Kiwanis Club, a former member of the Midland Jaycees, alumni member of Leadership Midland, actively involved as a volunteer at Chestnut Hill, and serves on the Advanced/Accelerated advisory committee for Midland Public Schools. Ben enjoys hanging out with his daughter, Maddie and participating in several sports.

Ben joined the Center Board as a result of his involvement in the Dow College Opportunity Program. Ben appreciates the opportunity to serve once again and looks forward to the opportunity to help lead the Center and its many beneficial programs.

United Way Bestows Charles J. Stosacker Award On Plewa

At the February 17, 2010 Annual Meeting of the Midland County United Way, Wendy Plewa, WMFC Preschool Director/Teacher received the Charles J. Stosacker Award. This award was established to recognize

preschool children over the last nine years. Every year she helps "our children" get on the right educational path. By the time these children enter Kindergarten they are on task with their peers. This has not been easy. She cannot accomplish her mission by only doing wonders in the classroom. To be truly successful, she needs to be in the homes of her students, ascertaining their home life, getting close to the parents, gaining insight as to what each child has in the way of supports and needs.

Wendy ensures that the parents are a part of their child's learning because she believes that this is the key to each child's success. She bridges the gap between home and school by including the

parents in their child's learning. She encourages parents to work as part of a team to implement the best learning practices for their child. She teaches parents by role modeling

developmentally appropriate practices and conscious discipline strategies.

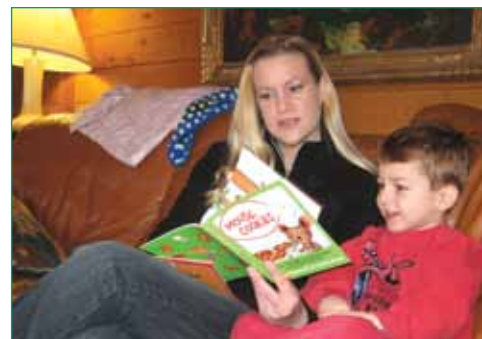
Lois Burton, Family Mentor and former Stosacker Award recipient says of Wendy, "She is truly dedicated to children. Wendy makes sure that each child in her classroom feels loved, safe and supported. She goes out of her way to understand each child's unique emotional and academic needs. As a result she approaches each child differently, in a way that speaks to the heart of each child."

Wendy believes strongly in education for all. She encourages others to invest in their education, citing it as the best investment any of us can make. Congratulations Wendy..... this is a well deserved honor!



Wendy, her son Jordan and husband Bob at the United Way Annual Meeting.

individuals for their contributions and leadership, which help promote the well being of Midland County residents. Wendy has helped shape a bright future for 240 WMFC



Wendy on a home visit with David

April Is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Prevention organizations across the nation dedicate April to creating public awareness and understanding for the value of prevention efforts to the safety of our nation's children. The need to increase public awareness to the importance of ensuring the safety and welfare of children led to the first Federal child protection legislation - the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), in 1974. Although CAPTA has been amended many times over the years, the original legislation remains intact. WMFC patrons have been beneficiaries of this legislation through CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND grants that

allow WMFC to run prevention programs that strengthen family bonds and protect children.

What is Prevention? Increasingly, prevention experts are examining the personal, familial, and environmental matters that strengthen families and reduce the risk of abuse and neglect. Research shows that while some situations negatively impact children and families, others can alleviate negative effects and provide benefits to parents and children. The following bullet points show some successful family support activities that researchers

deem effective as part of a child abuse prevention program. These attributes enhance protective factors. The italicized descriptions, demonstrate how WMFC addresses these activities:

- **Parental confidence and knowledge:** *Through a Family Mentor program, we have a means for parents to get support regarding parenting issues, including: parenting classes, support groups and home visits.*

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To Our Kind Contributors

**A thousand thank-yous do not sufficiently express our gratitude.
Yours is an essential role in the achievements we witness daily**



April Is National Child Abuse Prevention Month Continued from page 3

- **Strong bonds between parents and children:** We provide opportunities for parents and children to engage in activities just for fun and give families reason to laugh together.
- **Family social connections to decrease isolation:** We offer opportunities for parents in the neighborhood to get to know one another and develop support systems. We have potlucks, classes and encourage parents to take volunteer and leadership roles.
- **Family knowledge of child development:** Parent education classes provide important information associated with all aspects of child rearing including an understanding of reasonable expectations for each age group.
- **Concrete support in times of need:** We provide for a family's basic needs, offer extra support to families when they need it, as in times of illness, job loss, housing problems and other family stressors.
- **Children are socially and emotionally capable:** We help children articulate their feelings and get along with others. When children bring home what they learn at the Center, parents benefit as well.

When a parent treats a child with respect, love, and understanding, it affects the child for a lifetime—making it easier for children to develop and keep friendships, succeed at school and work, sustain a happy marriage, and parent, effectively. We focus on the efforts that will prevent abuse or neglect from happening in the first place.

To learn more about child abuse prevention in Midland County, check The Safe and Sound Child Protection and Advocacy website at - <http://www.safeandsoundcac.net/> for information on National initiatives see - <http://www.pinwheelsforprevention.org>



Pinwheels for Prevention

Be watching for the WMFC Pinwheel Garden. The children of WMFC will be “planting” pinwheels for prevention in April to acknowledge the importance of prevention in the lives of children.