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“Thanks Charles J. Strosacker Foundation for keeping the pool open for me and my friends this summer!”, exclaims 11 year old Mariah Hunt.

Family Camps At Neyati Still Prove Popular *...continued from page 1*



“On your mark...” families compete in boat races at WMFC Family Camp

parents have and let them relax and enjoy their family,” explained Family Services Director, **Renee Young**, “we tell them to let us do the worrying.”

“Each family had their own cabin with beds and electricity. Each section of cabins had a staff member assigned to them to be their Cabin Host during their camp visit,” explained Young. “Being assigned a Cabin Host gave each family a go-to person if they had questions about camp and it also helped make the families feel welcome during the entire time that they were at camp.

During camp each family had a job that they were responsible for completing. Jobs were assigned to families with their children’s ages in mind. Duties such as garbage patrol, washing dishes and cleaning up the waterfront were the types of jobs that families pitched in and helped with.

The main goal of the camp experience was to build relationships between the families and the WMFC Staff. “Camp provides an accelerated opportunity for us to get to know the families in a way that would normally take months to do,” commented **Gail Crosby**, WMFC Summer Program Co-Director.

“Once you have been to camp with the families, most of them become your “friends” for life. They see us as real people, who laugh, act silly, and don’t judge them. It’s amazing,” said Crosby.

In addition to having families attend camp, WMFC was able to arrange for

approximately 80 students from the WMFC Summer Adventure Program to visit camp for two days. While at camp, the Summer Adventure Program students spent the day swimming, boating and fishing.



Dakota Prokopp (child), Ashley Prokopp and Jeremiah Miller complete the family obstacle course at family camp



West Midland Family Center's Family FOCUS

Enhancing the Quality of Life for Area Residents of all ages

VOLUME 23, NUMBER 2 • P.O. Box 1985 • Midland, MI 48641-1985 • www.wmfc.org • (989) 832-3256 • Summer 2013



“We’re very proud to have supported the West Midland Family Center over the past 25 years. We hope this challenge grant spurs others to renew their support or to become involved with WMFC. The work they do to strengthen families makes our community a better place for all of us to live, work and play.”

*Margaret Ann (Ranny) Riecker,
President
Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow
Foundation*

Match Maker Shows Us the Love Again

The **Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation** has once again blessed West Midland Family Center with a huge gift...contingent on if the rest of the community will also help out a huge amount. Specifically the Foundation will give us \$1 for every \$1 we raise from individuals and local groups (Sorry, no foundations qualify for matches, but we still need your help too!)

“The Foundation is hoping the match will help encourage individuals and groups to either start giving or to increase the level of their past support” said **Greg Dorrien**, Executive Director. “The matching grant, if fully exercised,

will be worth \$100,000 per year over a three-year period of time, for a total of \$300,000.”

“Last year, without a match we raised about \$75,000 from individuals and groups reached through our year-end appeal, and if that happens again this year we would only qualify to receive \$75,000 of the Foundation’s match...so we will need a lot more people helping out. Donor development does take time as people start to pay attention to the good things that occur out here on a daily basis, so in time we hope to have others join in this worthy community effort,” concluded Dorrien.

Family Camps At Neyati Still Prove Popular

The West Midland Family Center (WMFC) Family Services Department hosted three family camps at Camp Neyati throughout the summer during the months of June and July. All three camps were three days long and included two overnight stays. Forty-five families, consisting of 240 individuals, attended the camps. All activities at camp were planned and implemented by the WMFC Family Services Staff. Activities and events included boating, yard games, fishing, swimming craft projects, boat building and boat races, spa time, obstacle courses, and campfires complete with s’mores. All activities and dinners were provided free of charge.

Even though the monster mosquitoes threatened to fly away with the fun, families who were surveyed, had only

one major complaint...they were not able to stay longer at camp. The camp experience was a first for many and something that they could not have afforded to duplicate on their own.

“One of the goals of the family camp is to take away everyday stressors that *...continued on page 4*



Canoeing is one of the family highlights at camp

WMFC Announces New Preschool Class Offerings

In *Oliver Twist* when Oliver bravely asked “Please Sir, I want some more...” He was met with scorn from the head master. It is hard asking for help from those with the means to do so... fortunately for our preschool children every single group we have asked for help this year has responded with an enthusiastic “yes.” As a result WMFC preschool programs will again be expanding this fall.

We have added a second section of 3’s preschool at West Midland Family Center, and we have also added 4’s preschool (known as the Great Start Readiness Program) in two new locations. **St. Vincent de Paul Church** in Shepherd (across the street from Shepherd Elementary School), and at **Floyd Elementary School** (part of the **Bullock Creek Schools**). The 3’s program will be half day and both 4’s programs will be full day programs.

“High quality preschool programs coupled with good parent education programs have proven to be an outstanding investment for everyone. The most famous and best documented example of this is the *Perry Preschool Study* where both the students and a similarly situated control group were tracked for over forty years. This

study demonstrates that a child’s early introduction to education is beneficial over a lifetime. In comparison to the control group, the study demonstrates that children receiving a high-quality preschool experience including parental involvement, show enhanced academic achievement as evidenced by test scores at age 14 when participant group member test scores were 29% higher than those of the control group. Additionally, 71% of program participants graduated high school, as compared to 54% of control group members. As adults, participant group members were far more likely to be gainfully employed than the control group (50% versus 32%) and fewer participant group members received welfare assistance,” said **Greg Dorrien**, Executive Director West Midland Family Center. “Of course no one at our Center is looking at providing preschool so that society can benefit...we do it so the child can benefit by being ready for kindergarten and can begin charting their own path in life with confidence of knowing they are as good as anybody else,” concluded Dorrien.

Specifically, WMFC would like to thank **Memorial Presbyterian Church, Kiwanis Foundation, Kiwassee Kiwanis Club, Midland Rotary Club, United Way of Midland County,**

members of **The Big Give, Governor Rick Snyder** and the legislatures of the State of Michigan. Their kindness and financial support results in a wonderful preschool experience for 140, 3 & 4 year old children this year through West Midland Family Center. Together we make all the difference.

A kindness is never forgotten, even a simple word brings with it great power as *Oliver Twist* exemplifies. “For the rest of his life, *Oliver Twist* remembers a single word of blessing spoken to him by another child because this word stood out so strikingly from the consistent discouragement around him.” A blessing of community support offered to children will last a lifetime.



Preschoolers enjoy many new learning activities. Building with blocks can be educational and fun!

Junior Lifeguards Graduate ...continued from page 1

Director. “**Chloe Young** and **Carly Finney** did a phenomenal job this summer, as did their instructor **Jake Sira**.”

Over the past 12 years approximately 40 students have explored the world of aquatics from the view of a lifeguard chair as part of the WMFC Junior Lifeguard Program. Of those who have been involved in the program, approximately 15 have successfully become certified lifeguards.



Junior Lifeguard Chloe Young, Meridian High School Sophomore, learns from Instructor Jake Sira how to maintain healthy pool chemistry

Beautiful Memorial Stones Added to Diane Dauer Memorial Garden

On a beautiful sunny day in early June, the **Diane Dauer Memorial Garden** was updated with its very own memorial stone. TNT Stone Engraving of St. Charles was contracted to do the beautiful stone work that now sits in the garden which is located next to the north entrance of the Center.



New engraved memorial stones in the Diane Dauer Memorial Garden

Three years ago the garden was developed as a memorial to the late Diane Dauer who worked as a WMFC Welcome Center Receptionist for 24 years. At that time, it was decided that a butterfly garden would be planted. As a result, the plants that were chosen

for the garden are all plants that are the most attractive to butterflies. The design of the stonework was chosen to fit the butterfly theme of the garden.

“I talked to Diane’s family about what type of flowers she liked,” explained **Renee Young**, WMFC Family Services Director who took the lead in the development and completion of the garden project, “Diane loved daises and butterflies, thus the reason for the theme of the garden.”



Diane Dauer worked at the Center for 24 years. She passed away in 2006 and is still dearly missed by all who knew her.



The garden’s butterflies watched from nearby flowers as the stones were being put into place

“Most of the flowers in the garden have come from my garden and the gardens of other staff members and volunteers,” concluded Young. “Our goal is to continue to add more perennials in the years ahead and someday add a sprinkler system to help keep the garden well watered.”

Donations for the garden can be made by calling Renee Young at 989-832-3256. If you would like to volunteer to help maintain Diane’s garden or any of the other gardens at WMFC, please contact **Gail Crosby**, WMFC Connect & Serve Director at 989-832-3256.

Summer Program Students Practice Sharing In Many Forms

Of the 198 children who were part of the West Midland Family Center (WMFC) Summer Adventure Program, 100 were first grade through fifth grade students. These children were divided into same age groups of ten students each. Students spent their days in a variety of ways, including swimming in WMFC’s beautiful outdoor pool, building various crafts, taking part in the Dow Library Summer Reading Program, mastering the climbing wall, roller skating in the gym, and researching activity ideas in the computer lab.

The students were also invloved in a variety of different projects throughout the summer. The first graders took on a community service project that involved making dog treats for the local animal shelter. They also put together activity bags to give to children in the

hospital. The fifth graders made cards and tray favors to send along with the home-delivered meals to area seniors. The children also went on field trips throughout the summer. Eighty of the students visited Camp Neyati for a day of swimming, boating and fishing. Another group of students took part in a collaborative field trip to Barstow Woods with North Midland Family Center, Railway Family Center, Midland Community Center, ARC and the United Way to compete in a variety of Pool Noodle Challenges. These challenges included Pool Noodle Hockey, Noodle Buckaroo Lasso Challenge and Javelin Throw. The trip was not only fun for the children, but it proved beneficial in raising awareness about what the United Way does for our community, amongst the staff, children and parents.

At the end of the summer all of the students in the Summer Adventure Program competed in a “penny challenge” to raise money for the United Way. Fish bowls were placed in the lobby. Each age group of students was assigned a fish bowl. Students brought in loose change to put into the fish bowls in hopes of beating the other fish bowl teams. The kids and staff got really excited about the challenge. At the end of the challenge, almost every fish bowl was full to the top. One team even filled two fish bowls! The final amount of money donated to the United Way was \$310.

We owe tremendous thanks to the **Harry A. and Margaret D. Towsley Foundation** for their long term support of the Summer Adventure Program.