

# Family Focus

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 2

Thriving, Giving, Growing ... Together

Summer 2014

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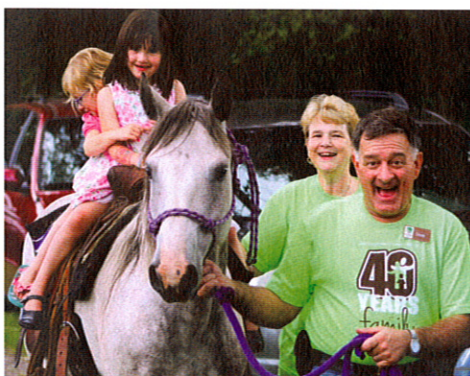
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## “Forty Years of Family” Event is a Hit with the Community



This year the **West Midland Family Center (WMFC)** commemorates its 40th anniversary and in turn celebrated 40 years of service with a huge celebration! Approximately 925 community members came together to celebrate the landmark achievement during the four-hour afternoon event. Activities included, but were not limited to, a petting zoo, horse back rides, a climbing

wall, inflatables, trolley rides, and lawn games. **Loose Change, Empty Canvas** and **Butch Heath** provided live entertainment while a free picnic style dinner was served outdoors, (and indoors by Senior Services of Midland County) to all in attendance. WMFC thanks all of our sponsors for their generous support of this very special event! See pages 3-4 to see if we captured your picture!



*Steve and Gale Kissinger provided horses for horse rides at the 40th Anniversary Celebration.*

## Midland Kiwanis Club Members Get Their Hands Dirty To Help WMFC Children

In January, a team of people met to discuss the possibility of exciting new projects that, if completed, would benefit the young families of West Midland County. The team consisted of **WMFC Preschool Staff Members, Executive Director, Greg Dorrien** and **Midland Kiwanis Club members, John Anderson, Cathy Devendorf, Don Hammond and Earl Soules**. Kiwanis was particularly interested in brainstorming project ideas that would make a lasting contribution to the well being of the children in our community. Several different projects were discussed including a future expansion, volunteering in the

## Middle School Students Complete “Summer of Service”

Middle and high school students around the country are now, in many instances, being required to serve as volunteers in their communities. Volunteering has become an important part of a student’s learning experience. To assist teens in this aspect of their

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# Kiwanis Members Get Hands Dirty *...continued from page 1*



*Completed Play Structure*

classroom, providing scholarships and the need for a playground for the youngest children at the Center.

Kiwanis encouraged staff members to “think big” and shared that they would like to take on a two part playground build over the span of two years. As a result, **WMFC Early Childhood Director Trixie Onstott** and **Frank Riggle of Miracle Playgrounds** met to discuss what a “dream” playground might look like and put together a plan for an amazing new playground. With the help and support of Earl Soules, the plan was approved and the put into action!

In mid-July Phase 1 of the two-year project began. WMFC staff members moved and unwrapped the structure



*Volunteers and WMFC staff work together to make “dream” playground a reality at WMFC.*

while volunteers and **Dream Fields Playground Builder and Inspector Tom Carstens** set the play structure into place to complete Phase I. Phase II will be completed in 2015 and include the addition of a climbing structure that looks like a big mama bear!

During the January meeting Kiwanis had also decided to make volunteering in the classrooms a priority. As a result, Kiwanis volunteers came in at least once every other week to volunteer. They played with the children, read stories, or shared things about their jobs. **John Anderson** and **Bill Heeschen** shared their love of music by playing the piano and the saxophone for the preschool classes. Bill and John taught the children new songs and led sing-alongs. There were even times when the children got up and danced as they listened to John and Bill play their instruments.



*John Anderson and Bill Heeschen share their love of music with the preschool children.*

WMFC appreciates the hard work of all of those who made our playground “dream” into our new reality and for our very own “men of music”! Your investment into our community is something that will have long lasting effects for many generations to come!



*Joe and Joseph Nash work together on a team activity. The pair built a tower out of spaghetti noodles, duct tape and marshmallows.*

## WMFC Family Camp Neyati Continues Tradition of Fun!

West Midland Family Center sponsored three family camps at Camp Neyati in June and July. Each camp consisted of three days and two nights. Forty-two families, totaling 232 people, participated in this years camps.

“Every child dreams of going to camp some day and every parent dreams of taking a family vacation,” explained **Gail Crosby, Connect and Serve Coordinator**. “Hosting family camps at Camp Neyati for WMFC families often fulfills the dreams of the child as well as the parent.”

## Happy Campers Comment on Neyati

“I have always found that after you have interacted with families during family camp that your relationship back at WMFC is enhanced tremendously. There is something about being out in nature, having fun, being silly and singing crazy songs

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On July 31, 2014 WMFC Celebrated 40 Years of Family!





# Happy 40th Anniversary West Midland Family Center!





# WMFC Students Complete “Summer of Service” ...continued on page 1

education and personal growth WMFC offered several opportunities for teens to volunteer in service projects of their choosing this summer.

“The ‘service project’ message was introduced into the WMFC Middle School Summer Program through daily and weekly themed projects,” explained **Stacey Urbani, WMFC Middle School Summer Program Director**. “The projects were designed with many different outcomes in mind. The initial projects served as team building projects,” continued Urbani. “One of the teens’ favorite team building activities was doing random acts of kindness for one another. This helped build a bond and helped everyone on the team to feel valued by the team as a whole. Team building helped teach the teens how to work together before they took on larger projects,” concluded Urbani.

The larger projects focused on, not only the needs of their community, but also on the needs of the nation and the world. Students were encouraged to choose projects which they had a personal interest in.

The first project that the teens devoted themselves to was readying



*Middle School Students making a safer playground.*

the playground. The teens worked diligently spreading 25 cubic yards of woodchips to provide WMFC children with a safer playground.

The second project they chose helped the furry friends of Midland County. The team baked homemade dog biscuits and delivered them to the **Midland County Humane Society**.

The teens chose **Sole Hope** as their global focus project. Sole Hope, a non-profit organization, works to offer hope, healthier lives and freedom from foot-related diseases through education, jobs and medical relief.

The teens hosted a Sole Hope Shoe Cutting Party. During the three day “party” the teens cut denim material for 45 pairs of shoes. The shoe materials were then sent to a local church where they became part of a larger shoe cutting party. The completed project produced 200 pairs of shoes to help the children in Uganda. (For more information regarding Sole Hope please visit [www.solehope.org](http://www.solehope.org))

As a result of participating in service projects, the students were able to identify with some of the greater needs within their community and the world, and they learned that they could play an important role in fulfilling the needs of others. Here are comments that some of the teens shared about their “summer of giving” experience:

*“Really good to help somebody who can’t help themselves!”*

*Janae, age 13*

*“I hope that what we did helps the kids in Uganda.”*

*Joe, age 13*



*Denim fabric was cut to provide 45 pairs of shoes for the children of Uganda.*

*“It felt good to help animals that don’t get what they need.”*

*Jade, age 11*

*“I felt like I was giving back. It made me feel happy cause it might help get dogs homes.”*

*TJ, age 13*

*“Working in the kitchen I’ve learned recipes for cooking at home. I’ve learned how to work better with others.”*

*Zach, age 15*

WMFC staff members believe that if students get involved in helping their community in a way that matters to them, the lasting benefits can be far-reaching. As anyone who has ever volunteered knows, the satisfaction and pride that comes from helping others can be life changing.

WMFC’s **Connect and Serve Program** offers volunteer opportunities for students to serve in their communities. Summer is an especially good time for teens to look into volunteering at WMFC. Each summer **Connect and Serve Coordinator, Gail Crosby** posts many volunteer roles that can be filled by students looking for a positive and valuable volunteer experience. For information contact Crosby at 989-832-3256.





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



*Carter and mom Tricia design their family  
boat for the family camp boat race.*

that helps people to drop their guard and just be people. Fun has a way of putting people on the same playing field.

*...WMFC Staff Member*

"One of the things I remember from camp was one of the older teens saying to his dad, 'Come on dad, this is an event for the 'whole family unit'; we can do this, it will be fun.' (They all did it and had a great time) I was impressed that the teenager really captured the heart of Family Camp."

*...WMFC Staff Member*

## Happy Campers Comment On Neyati *...continued from page 2*

"There are always several parents who say that they really needed the time away to refocus on what is important, to remember that their family should be priority."

*...WMFC Staff Member*

"My favorite part of family camp was watching my kids have fun and doing activities as a family. Bonding with my kids and spending time as a family was awesome!"

*...Parent Participant*

"Being at family camp taught me that family time is most important; time goes by way too fast, don't let it slip away, kids grow up way too fast..."

*...Parent Participant*

"I am so thankful that we were able to come here! This is something my kids and I would never have been able to do!"

*...Parent Participant*

"I found that one of the most valuable experiences of camp was in having activities where our family had to work together. Making a boat together and then 'sailing' it was a highlight!"

*...WMFC Parent Participant*

"Camp Neyati made us closer as a family."

*...Parent Participant*



*Mackenzie was chosen by her family to  
represent them in the family boat race.*