

Miss Ruby's Kids

Enabling parents to inspire a passion for learning in their children

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Miss Ruby's Kids: A resource for literacy in Georgetown County

In the person of its Executive Director Betsy Marlow, **Miss Ruby's Kids** is extending the organization's collaborations with other non-profits, which share its goals in improving the quality of life for Georgetown County families.

Betsy has joined the Outreach Committee of the county's Adult Literacy Council, whose mission is to eliminate the many forms of illiteracy that hinder the growth of individuals and the economy of Georgetown County. She brings the familiarity with at-risk families gained through three years of work with **Miss Ruby's Kids** to an organization seeking to assist the adult members of similar families.

The Council plans to establish satellite sites in four locations at different corners of the county; these will serve rural residents who are unable to attend classes at the Howard Campus in Georgetown. The charge of the Outreach Committee on which Betsy serves is to make connections with the community and get the word out to potential clients that tutoring assistance is available to them free of charge.

Recently, Betsy was named a Board Member of Georgetown County's Success by 6 program. Success by 6, an initiative of the Georgetown County United Way, is a national community-based movement of public and private partnerships working together to ensure all children, from birth to age 6, are healthy, nurtured, and ready to succeed. Although its aims are broader in scope than those of **Miss Ruby's Kids**, Betsy's expertise in early childhood literacy will enrich the offerings to be made available by the initiative.

Pat Strickland, Executive Director of Georgetown County United Way, serves on the Board of **Miss Ruby's Kids**. Her colleague in Success by 6 is Carol Daly, head of the local First Steps organization. Betsy and Carol are completing the first year of their successful collaboration: a series of literacy training workshops for parents of children enrolled in four county daycare Centers of Excellence.

Finally, Betsy has become a certified practitioner for Georgetown County's "Triple P" Positive Parenting Program. This is a nationally acclaimed effort, now offered to nine counties in South Carolina through the University of South Carolina's Building Connections program. "Triple P" offers training sessions to child

care directors and teachers of young children; the sessions focus on strategies parents can use to prevent and/or solve children's behavioral problems and to develop positive behavior and new skills. Betsy has thus become a resource for **Miss Ruby's Kids'** families and for the staff of the childcare centers she visits through her work with First Steps. As a member of the local "Triple P" Advisory Board, she will also participate in its efforts to disseminate their information more widely all across the county.

Miss Ruby's Kids gains strength and name recognition through Betsy's affiliations with these other local non-profits. They, in turn, will benefit greatly from the wisdom she has gained through her association with **Miss Ruby's Kids'** parent organization, the Parent-Child Home Program.



Miss Ruby's Kids is a **PAIRS** affiliate (Parents & Adults Inspiring Reading Success) and a **Georgetown County United Way** Agency.

Home Visitors: The HEART of Miss Ruby's Kids

Marva Riley and Alice Young joined **Miss Ruby's Kids** as Home Visitors in the fall of 2004. Both were recruited by Barbara Logan, an original Home Visitor and highly respected teacher in the Georgetown County school system. Now in their second year as Home Visitors, Marva and Alice are enjoying the fruits of what they planted with their first-year students.

Marva Riley is a graduate of "Miss Ruby's School," the Episcopal Diocese-supported school at Holy Cross Faith Memorial Church. She attended the school from first through eighth grade. Marva describes her years with Miss Ruby as "challenging." Miss Ruby, she says, "was a taskmaster, but yet a warm person. She "encouraged us to never give up but always to try and so most of us went on to high school and even to college." After her 8th grade graduation, Marva attended Howard High School in Georgetown, moving on to receive her Bachelors in English and English Education from



Allen University in Columbia. She taught high school English in Dorchester and Horry Counties until her retirement in 1999.

Returning home to Georgetown County, Marva began working with Georgetown County's Adult Education Program, focusing on adults who are pursuing a GED certificate and looking for employment opportunities. She still works part-time for this program and, in addition, serves as a Home Visitor for two **Miss Ruby's Kids** children who will 'graduate' in May.

In her two years as a **Miss Ruby's Kids** Home Visitor, Marva has witnessed marvelous changes in the two children (a boy and a girl) she visits twice weekly. Her boy student has become so engaged in the books she brings him weekly that he now relates himself to the hero (Peter) of some of the stories contained in the curriculum books. Marva's girl student has surpassed merely working on numbers and alphabet letters and insists upon "reading" her book to Marva during her bi-weekly visits. Marva attributes the success of her students to the cooperation of their parents and the way in which the families take time between visits to reinforce the lessons she is trying to impart.

Marva evaluates her time with **Miss Ruby's Kids** as a valuable service to her community and looks forward to the challenge of initiating new children into the program in 2006-2007.

Also joining the **Miss Ruby's Kids** roster of Home Visitors in 2004 is Alice Young. Well known to many local residents because of her 30-year service at the Pawleys Island Post Office, Alice fitted seamlessly into **Miss Ruby's Kids** following her retirement. As the mother of 6 children (4 of them **Miss Ruby's** School graduates), Alice is a natural advocate and supporter of this program, which is designed to serve as "Miss Ruby's" legacy to the under-served and at-risk children of Georgetown County.

Alice's love of children is manifested in every area of her life. She has served as Youth Choir Director for St. John's AME Church for 20 years, has worked with the children in both Sunday School and Vacation Bible School, and currently volunteers with the Good News Club, an after-school program for children at Waccamaw Elementary School. This love is now paying large dividends for the 5 children she visits through the **Miss Ruby's Kids** program.

This year, Alice added 3 first-year students to her original two children. She says she is pleased with their progress at both levels. Both of her second year students are now able to do more than the assigned work with vocabulary words, forming sentences, and identifying numbers and colors. The boy's progress is so pronounced that his grandmother is referring neighbor



children who want to benefit from Home Visits. Alice's first-year students who began the year as shy and not talkative have "found their voice."

Alice's one grandchild who lived close by moved away last year. "I feel that the Lord has filled my life with other children," she says. "These children are all ready and eager to learn. They just need someone to read to them and show their parents how very special learning can become in their lives."

Program news

Second Graduation Ceremony Scheduled

Miss Ruby's Kids will celebrate its second graduation ceremony at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, May 21st, in the chapel of Holy Cross Faith Memorial Church. This year eight graduates will receive certificates, indicating that they have successfully completed the two years of Home Visits which constitute the Parent-Child Home Program curriculum. Following the graduation ceremony, the children and their parents will be honored at a reception in Miss Ruby's Garden on the church grounds.

We're Moving -- Again!

Miss Ruby's Kids has located office space right in the heart of Georgetown – at 829 Front Street, Suite E. Moving Day is June 1st, and the new telephone number will be 527-8560.

All the staff and Board Members are excited at the prospect of having room to store curriculum materials on site and space for our own Home Visitor, Board and Committee meetings. Moving to Georgetown has been the organization's goal for more than a year since it supports our mission of offering our program to children in every part of the county. We invite you to visit us after we get the boxes unpacked!

Miss Ruby's Kids and First Steps: Similar yet different

Since **Miss Ruby's Kids** began its fruitful collaboration with South Carolina First Steps last fall, a number of our Friends have expressed confusion about how and if the two organizations are related.

First Steps is a statewide initiative to help prepare children to reach first grade "healthy and ready to succeed." Signed into law in 1999, First Steps is for pre-first grade children and their families. Funding for First Steps is made up of private donations and state dollars allocated by the South Carolina General Assembly. Last year Georgetown County First Steps reported 83 % funding from the state, 15% from in-kind services and 2% from private sources.

First Steps is a community-driven effort. Each county has determined its greatest needs and is providing or enhancing services to boost the school readiness of its children. In Georgetown County First Steps' efforts are focused on parent education, providing training opportunities for child care providers and on providing assistance to families who need quality child care and cannot afford it.

Miss Ruby's Kids is also community-driven – it is a grassroots nonprofit organization that focuses primarily on parenting and early childhood literacy. Funding sources are: 61% foundation grants, 30% private donations and 9% contract services.

Both First Steps and **Miss Ruby's Kids** provide home visitation programs for families. First Steps works with parents through the Parents As Teachers (PAT) program. In the PAT program the emphasis is on child development and the families include those with children ages 0-5. Last year through its PAT program, First Steps provided 275 home visits to 64 families in the county.

Miss Ruby's Kids brings the Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) to families. PCHP is an intensive two-year, research-proven program for families with 2 and 3 year old children. PCHP prepares children for school success by modeling to parents how to use books and toys carefully chosen to stimulate greater verbal interaction and to strengthen the parent-child relationship. This school year **Miss Ruby's Kids** will provide 874 home visits to 19 families through PCHP.

Effective collaboration provides the framework for First Steps, which promotes and assists efforts of agencies and public and private organizations (like **Miss Ruby's Kids**). By working together, these entities can intensify critically needed services, assure efficiency of available resources, and eliminate duplication of efforts. The parent literacy workshops which **Miss Ruby's Kids** has organized in four Georgetown County child care centers is an excellent example of such teamwork between child-focused organizations.

As a state funded program, First Steps serves a broader population and has more generalized aims than does **Miss Ruby's Kids**, which is privately funded and focused on early childhood literacy in Georgetown County's two and three-year old children. The collaboration with First Steps, however, has allowed **Miss Ruby's Kids** to reach more parents and children across Georgetown County, sharing with them its strategies for ensuring that parents can become their child's first, best teacher.

An estimated 300 children are born each year in Georgetown County at risk of school failure. It is certain that no one agency can address all of their needs.

Friends host winter events

MRK appreciates Sweethearts

The Friends of **Miss Ruby's Kids** thanked their members, the "sweethearts" who have helped us grow with their gifts of money, time and talent, at a pre-Valentine's Day party held where Miss Ruby taught, now the Parish Hall of Holy Cross Faith Memorial Church. A gift from the PSARAS Foundation supported the

event, with delicious edibles by Carefree Catering and wine from Pawleys Island Wine & Spirits.



Bill Wilson, Peggy Wilson and Jan Jones

Guests received thanks from Jo Fortuna and Betsy Marlow, co-founders of **Miss Ruby's Kids**, and were given a brief history of Miss Ruby's School by local historian and **Miss Ruby's Kids** Board Member Lee Brockington, Home Visitor Marva Riley, a student at the school during Miss Ruby's tenure, and Home Visitor Alice Young, four of whose children are graduates of the school. The event was a fitting tribute to our valued donors and to the desire for a quality education for all young children this community has inherited from Miss Ruby Forsythe.

Learners for All Seasons

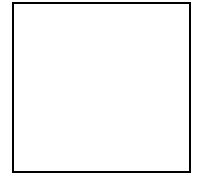
Lee Brockington returned to Miss Ruby's School in late February and again in early March as the first speaker in the Learners For All Seasons series of talks sponsored by the Friends of **Miss Ruby's Kids**. This first event was offered to the members of local book clubs, a natural constituency for an organization devoted to early childhood literacy and the importance of reading. Lee spoke about "Women of the Waccamaw," and recounted events in the lives of many outstanding women whose roots lie here in Georgetown County. More than 100 women – and a few brave men – turned out to hear Lee, perhaps our area's best-known and most popular speaker. Miss Ruby Forsythe was one of the women featured. Lee's description of her visit to Miss Ruby's School to show the children examples of local wildlife (including a live snake) gave the audience a very vivid appreciation of the school and its principal, whose name lives on in **Miss Ruby's Kids**, the organization which honors her name and her legacy.



Learners For All Seasons is an outreach effort by the Friends of **Miss Ruby's Kids**, offering enrich-



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ment opportunities to members of the community while informing them about our mission and engaging their interest as volunteers, donors, and Friends.

Friends of Miss Ruby's Kids

We are most grateful for all those who became new members and renewed their membership between January and April. We're not perfect so let us know if you should have been listed here!

Margaret Ammons, Amy Armstrong, Betty & George Asnip, Susan Benati, Carol Bolin, Margaret Bradley, Lee Brockington, Howard & Anne Burgin, Robin Calderon, Jimmy & Rebecca Chandler, Beverly & Bill Clancy, Valerie & Michael Cole, Ernie & Marion Dozzi, Jo & Wally Fortuna, Barbara Greene, Patty Griffith, Cam Grizmal, Ella & Scott Henderson, Louise Heroux, Billie & Alan Houghton, Lillie Jean Johnson, Ann Knight, Pixie & Tom Kubeck, Mitchell & Ewa Laurance, Pat Lively, Cynthia Magrath, Betsy Marlow, Jo Ann Morgan, Tiffany Nesbit, Hayden Quattlebaum, Vervatine Reid, James & Nancy Reitano, Jan Rice, James Rider, Carol Schnitzlein, Lee Simmons, Carol Smith, Marsha & Greg Smith, Joyce Tolan, Bunny & Ed Vaden, Clark & Linda Varnum, and Amy Webb.

Special thanks to: Amy Webb for a superb planning workshop; to Valerie Cole for spectacular floral arrangements, Sarah Wilson and her class for the decorations, and to McDonalds for gallons of iced tea for the 'Learners' events; to the Angels With Hammers group who repaired one of our families' front porch; to the super volunteers and Board Members for helping with the First Steps parenting workshops – Sue Benati, Nancy Hopkinson, Molly Huntoon, Pixie Kubeck, Carolyn Montagne and Teresa Peterson; to Michael and Valerie Cole for donating an answering machine for our new office; to Millie Herrman who helps make our office go on Tuesdays; and to Alice Young who cooked for the United Way Chili Cook-off and Marva Riley, Barbara Logan, and Zelma Carr who helped sell that delicious chili!

Thank you Friends!

Rose Red Hatters Adopt Miss Ruby's Kids

The Rose Red Hatters of Pawleys Island recently enjoyed a tea which combined entertainment with a benefit for **Miss Ruby's Kids**. Sue Benati, a *Friend* of **MRK** and a Rose Red Hatter, convinced the group's 25 other members to adopt early childhood literacy as a cause to support. According to Joyce Tolan, their leader, group members have enjoyed each other's company for the past three years.

Although most Red Hat groups are not organized to benefit local non-profits, Joyce says that the March tea is the first of other events her group plans to help **Miss Ruby's Kids** raise funds and awareness throughout the community. Our thanks to Joyce, owner of Island Antiques in Murrells Inlet, and the other Rose Red Hatters for their generous support.



Grace Flanagan and Louise Heroux help to change the world, one child at a time.

"I believe reading is the most important life skill, and the love of reading should begin at an early age. **Miss Ruby's Kids** is doing important groundwork to encourage reading in young children." *Grace Flanagan, Litchfield Readers Book Club*

"We all wish we could change the world, making it a better place for all children. **Miss Ruby's Kids** leads the way in changing the world for each individual child and family it serves." *Louise Heroux, Litchfield Readers Book Club*

Volunteer opportunity

Rainbow Childcare in Georgetown's Oatland community needs volunteer help to enter data and do other office work. Call 527-6131 for more information.