

Miss Ruby's Kids

Helping parents to inspire a passion for learning in their children

Third graduation May 20

Eight excited boys and girls and their families will gather at Holy Cross Faith Memorial Episcopal Church on the third Sunday afternoon in May along with friends and members of *Friends of Miss Ruby's Kids* to honor their graduation from the two year program.



Join us at 3:00 on Sunday, May 20 to celebrate this first educational milestone for our kids. A reception will follow the ceremony.

Choosing Your Candidate

How MRK can help in 2008

A recent editorial by David Brooks in *The New York Times* points out that our country's failing education system – and what to do about it – will be a talking point for all the 2008 presidential candidates. He offers an interesting formula for evaluating their answers.

Brooks could have been talking about Miss Ruby's Kids in this editorial

"The creative ones will finally absorb the truth found in decades of research: the relationships children have outside school shape their performance inside school... They will say... 'family relationships matter more than anything else... These candidates will emphasize that education is a cumulative process that begins at the dawn of life and builds early in life as children learn how to learn... They will note that if we want to have successful human capital policies, we have to get over the definition of education as something that takes place in schools between the hours of 8 and 3, between the months of September and June, and between the ages of 5 and 18.'

There is a mountain of evidence demonstrating that early childhood attachments shape lifelong learning competence... The question, of course, is: what can government do

about any of this? The answer is that there are programs that do work to help young and stressed mothers establish healthier attachments. These programs usually involve having nurses or mature women make a series of home visits to give young mothers the sort of practical wisdom that in other times would have been delivered by grandmothers or elders."

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Brooks could have been talking about **Miss Ruby's Kids** in this editorial. He stresses, as does the Parent Child Home Program of which **Miss Ruby's Kids** is a part, that education is 24/7 and that, to be successful, it must be a family and home effort, not one which is limited to the classroom!

Brooks ends his editorial: "In Britain... policy is catching up with the research. In the United States, we are forever behind. But that won't last. This year, some smart presidential candidate will help us catch up" **Miss Ruby's Kids** is already leading the way in this wake up call to our state and nation!

Sweethearts



Our Sweethearts enjoying the February Donor Appreciation Party refreshments

Miss Ruby's Kids board and staff hosted over 160 *Friends of Miss Ruby's Kids* at Hobcaw House in February to celebrate their support over the past year. Guests enjoyed a brief program featuring Lee Brockington and a program parent.

2007 Program and Families

An Interview with the Executive Director

One of the questions Betsy Marlow, **Miss Ruby's Kids'** Executive Director, is most frequently asked is: "How do you find the families for your program? How do *they* find **Miss Ruby's Kids**?" There are several answers, Betsy says, and these change as the program itself changes and expands throughout Georgetown County.

Local elementary schools are among the most effective means through which the program reaches out to families. Each year these schools send home flyers which parents with children who qualify for **Miss Ruby's Kids** can return to receive formal application materials. Child development centers and other nonprofit agencies, such as Habitat for Humanity and the county libraries, have joined with the schools in helping to recruit children who can benefit from the literacy training offered by **Miss Ruby's Kids**.

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Less structured, but also important, is what Betsy describes as the "word of mouth" effect. Families enrolled in the program refer their friends or neighbors to **Miss Ruby's Kids**, and the Home Visitors, who are so familiar with the communities in which they serve, are also a valuable source of information on qualified families.

Although Betsy feels that these recruitment efforts have been successful, she plans to explore new ways of identifying families. One such outreach will be to distribute information about **Miss Ruby's Kids** to area pediatricians and doctors who specialize in children with auditory or speech difficulties.

Moving on to families currently participating in the program, Betsy proudly reports that **Miss Ruby's Kids** met its goal of enrolling 25



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Leading Children to Literacy

children in this, its fourth year of operation. Of these families, 20 are English speaking and 5 have Spanish as their native language. In addition, this year's Home Visitors are working with children in Georgetown, Maryville, Andrews, Dunbar, and Choppee, as well as Pawleys Island, where the program began in 2003.

In 2007, Miss Ruby's Kids embarked on a pilot program designed for family child care centers

Not content to limit the program to its 25 enrolled families, Betsy, along with board members and volunteers has, for two years, collaborated with First Steps of Georgetown County, offering workshops to parents of children enrolled in six child development centers, selected as "Centers of Excellence" by First Steps. In this way, the techniques and enrichment activities incorporated in the **Miss Ruby's Kids** program are being offered, in abbreviated form, to more Georgetown County parents.

In 2007, **Miss Ruby's Kids** embarked on a pilot program designed for family child care centers. This new venture selects centers caring for a small group of children, treating it like an individual family home. Home Visitors come to the center twice a week, bringing with them two sets of books or toys and showing the day care providers how to stimulate the children's interest in learning and literacy, just as they would for the parent in individual **Miss Ruby's Kids** homes. This

exciting pilot will help providers in hard-to-reach areas of the county provide quality pre-literacy experiences for children who need it most.

Through this venture and others, benefits are extended to an ever growing constituency of families throughout our community.

Fun Learning

What do lettuce seeds, food coloring and corn syrup have to do with literacy skills? A great deal, according to Madeleine C. Ritchie, a **Miss Ruby's Kids** board member and longtime educational consultant for the Reid Foundation of Salt Lake City, Utah, and the Bunnelle Foundation of Georgetown County.

Madeleine conducted the second of three parent enrichment workshops sponsored by MRK in March. Nineteen parents of families currently in the program and 22 children came to Bethesda Baptist Church in Georgetown early one Saturday morning to learn how to use common household items to work with their children as they build pre-literacy skills.

The happy parents left with several bags full of "treasures" they could use to replicate the learning activities

Parents learned about many practical activities ranging from "walking the plank" to growing lettuce seedlings to "painting" with corn syrup colored with ordinary food coloring. The happy parents left with several bags full of "treasures" they could use to replicate the learning activities with their children at home and

ready-to-use new strategies to help their children gain necessary skills for success in school.

The Enriching A Child's Literacy Environment (ECLE) strategies demonstrated by Madeleine, and practiced by the participants, were developed by the Reid Foundation. ECLE is a program that was disseminated throughout the nation by the National Diffusion Network, U. S. Department of Education.

ECLE is a program of classroom and home instruction for teaching parents, teachers, and other care providers to develop oral language, thinking abilities, and motor skills in young children six months to three years old and complements and reinforces skills modeled in the Parent Child Home Program replicated by **Miss Ruby's Kids** Home Visitors.



Activities to develop large and small muscle coordination, oral language through sensory stimulation, print and number awareness, appreciation of literature, sensitivity to music and rhythm and basic concepts were demonstrated and practiced.