

Miss Ruby's Kids

Helping parents to inspire a passion for learning in their children

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Mentor project launched

Miss Ruby's Kids has launched an exciting new project to supplement its existing two-year home visitation program, the Parent Child Home Program. We are in the first year of a pilot program, the Education Mentor Project.

"It is the answer to my prayers", exclaimed one parent when she learned of the opportunity to enroll her child. It is a measure of the respect parents have for the PCHP program and their Home Visitors that all 14 of the MRK graduates now attending Waccamaw Elementary School are participating with their families.



From the left, MRK Board member Judy Ingle with her former student, Talya Dereef, Mentor Rosezell Wright, and Jayla, Talya's daughter and Rosezell's mentee. Jayla was one of MRK's first five "grads" in 2005 and is the little girl pictured on our reply envelope.

With the help of Vervatine Reid, Principal of Waccamaw Elementary and a member of the Miss Ruby's Kids Advisory Council, we have instituted a school mentoring program to insure the success of MRK graduates. The trained volunteer Mentors visit the graduates weekly and maintain communication with the graduates' families and school personnel on an ongoing basis. Through the Mentors' efforts, our graduates will have continued support throughout their school careers.



Jalael Edwards negotiates a treat with Mentor Deborah Spehar during the recent parent orientation at Waccamaw Elementary School.

Although graduates at Waccamaw Elementary are the first recipients of the mentoring program in Georgetown County, we hope to offer the services to all of our graduates as funds and mentors become available. If you would like more information about the MRK Education Mentor Project or about becoming a mentor, contact Wendy Walsh, MRK Program Coordinator at 527-8560.

New faces, new leadership

Our Board of Directors now numbers a robust 16 members with the election in January of eight new Directors and the retirement of three. We are excited to have a talented and diverse group of people that is willing to take on all the tasks necessary to keep a small, grassroots organization viable.

The new Board Chair, Teresa Peterson, pictured right, has outlined an active agenda for 2009 that includes planning new areas of community outreach and strategies for building organizational capacity.

Several new employees are happily settling into their roles on the program side: Wendy Walsh as Program Coordinator, Isabel



Rodriguez as Administrative Assistant, and Crystal Paschal and Carmen Williams as Home Visitors.

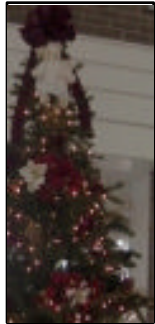
Litchfield Piggly Wiggly Angel Tree nets 116 gifts

For the fifth year, the Piggly Wiggly of Litchfield provided an Angel Tree in their store so that customers could share their generosity with the children of Miss Ruby's Kids. This year we were able to make the holidays much brighter by supplying the gifts generated by the Angel Tree to the children in our program.

After many trips to the Piggly Wiggly to pick up the gifts donated by the community, we counted 116 different packages. Our seven Home Visitors delivered the packages to our program children and their siblings during Christmas Week.

One mother of a large family covered her face as tears of joy ran down her cheeks

Imagine the joy on the faces of the family members as the packages arrived. One mother of a large family covered her face as tears of joy ran down her cheeks. She explained how she had not yet been able to



purchase any gifts for her children and this would make the holiday much happier for them. Another parent told the Home Visitor that her little girl liked the new jacket she received from the Angel Tree so much that she would not take it off and wore it around the house for days. A third child received a puzzle that became his favorite toy. We thank the Litchfield Piggly Wiggly and the community for helping to make Christmas much happier for our families.

Thank you!

A big Thank You to all of you who donated in response to our fall appeal. Because of your generosity our income is about even with last year. You are truly our angels!

The balance of this calendar year looks a bit less optimistic because we will not have access to some previously available grant funds. We should be able to complete this program year with all 40 enrolled families, however, we may have to reduce the number of families served next fall.

The education conversation

With a new administration and the prospect of changes in public education, there is a corresponding increase in the public conversation about what information should shape those changes. There are links on the *News* and *Links* pages of the Miss Ruby's Kids website to reliable sources of information and research on early education. We hope you'll take a look: www.missrubyskids.net.

One of the links on the website is to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). There, you will find a link to a policy brief prepared in early January by NIEER Co-directors for President Obama's transition team. The highlights of the federal policy proposals include a stimulus plan that would help create jobs and provide child care for parents who fill the jobs, increased investment to build capacity in early learning programs, and a council that would coordinate major federal programs for early learning and child care and to facilitate federal-state cooperation. See the full brief here:

<http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/18.pdf>



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