

Miss Ruby's Kids

Miss Ruby's Kids is named in honor of Mrs. Ruby Forsythe

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Program Director Betsy Marlow, left, shows Friends Chair Pixie Kubeck one of the toys Home Visitors use in home sessions

Teaching Language Skills:

How Miss Ruby's Kids Does It

When the Home Visitors sit down with a two-year-old and a book, what skills or techniques do they bring with them to encourage the child to read? In addition to devoting their full attention to the child during the time of their visit, the Home Visitors use one technique that is particularly suited to very young children. The technique is repetition.

According to **YouthLearn Initiative**, a comprehensive website which offers creative and relevant materials to educators, "The key to most education, especially to teaching reading, is repetition, reinforcement and practice." Though hardly a new idea, repetition is often looked down on as dull and boring, offering no excitement to either the child or the teacher. But repetition can be stimulating and effective *if* the teacher can find ways to relate it to activities that children enjoy.

Miss Ruby's Kids first graduation ceremony is Sunday, May 15. Congratulations to our first five graduates!!!

For example, one of the books used by our Home Visitors is *Wheels On The Bus*. "The wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round... The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish... The driver on the bus says 'Move on Back, Move on Back, Move on Back!'... The horn on the bus goes beep, beep, beep." The children love to join in saying the repeated words, even acting out the suggested movements. They will ask their parents or the Home Visitor to read this and other favorite books over and over again. They learn something new and retain familiar words every time they hear the story.

Encouraging young children to imitate sounds and rhythms fosters their speech and language development. Songs with recurring refrains or games that repeat words and rhythms can be fun while increasing language use and building vocabulary. Like the books, the toys that Home Visitors bring to the children are selected to reinforce the skills being developed in reading sessions. The goal of each Home Visitor is to impart to the child and to the parent the enthusiasm for books and the love of reading that she brings into their home during her time there.

Miss Ruby's Kids is a PAIRS Affiliate

PAIRS (Parents & Adults Inspiring Reading Success), a recently launched project of South Carolina's daily newspapers and administered by the state's Education Oversight Committee, was created to address some bleak

state statistics, such as ranking last among states in graduation rates, graduating only half of all ninth graders from high school in four years, and having 200,000 students score below proficient in reading on PACT tests in 2004.

How can PAIRS make a difference? By turning a spotlight on many pro-reading groups, such as Miss Ruby's Kids, working across the state and providing access to a network of resources, inspiration and encouragement.



**New MRK
Affiliation**

Program Director Betsy Marlow was recently invited to meet with editors at *The Myrtle Beach Sun News* and a representative from the Educational Oversight Committee to explore ways in which PAIRS can assist the Miss Ruby's Kids effort. She looks forward to the increased visibility the program will receive thanks to the efforts of *The Sun News* and our other local newspapers.

A "Gentle Hand" for Miss Ruby's Kids

Betsy Marlow taught first and second grade in the South Carolina Public Schools for 21 years before her retirement in 2001. In addition she was employed for eight years by Georgetown County's Department of Social Services as a child protection service worker. When an article describing the Parent Child Home Program (PCHP) appeared in *Parade Magazine* soon after she and her sister retired, it was nothing short of inevitable that they would send away for the information and decide to launch this highly successful early childhood education program in Georgetown County.

Four years later, the program is up and running, thanks to the support of Holy Cross Faith Memorial Church, and under the umbrella of Baskerville Outreach, Inc. Named "Miss Ruby's Kids" to honor Ruby Forsythe's 54-year teaching ministry to children on the Waccamaw Neck, the program currently enrolls 15 two- and three-year old children and will expand to include 20 families in 2005-2006.

The Parent Child Home Program boasts a 40-year history of early childhood literacy research and development. As a replication, Miss Ruby's Kids functions through a team of Home Visitors (seven currently at work in Georgetown County) who come to the children's homes twice a week, bringing with them either a book or a toy each week for the families to keep. The Home Visitor's role is to model techniques that the parent uses to engage the child's interest in "reading" the book or figuring out the toy, thereby. Parents participate in each learning session, becoming the child's first "teacher" at home. Further more, books recommended by PCHP are classics, such as "Goodnight Moon" or "We're Going on a Bear Hunt." Because many of them are used in the public schools, this early familiarity will help the children develop confidence when they enter the classroom.

Betsy describes the families who participate in the Miss Ruby's Kids program as "challenged" in one or more areas: the child's development may be delayed; the family's income level or level of literacy may be limited; or a single parent may be trying to work or attend school while caring for one or more children. For these families, the program offers a way to give their children a better chance for success when they enter school.

**Richer than I you can never be –
I had a Mother who read to me.**

Strickland Gillian

She offers two striking examples from her own and another Home Visitor's experience. One of her students was, initially, non-verbal, a "grunt and tug kind of kid." "When I first went to the house, she picked up the book and threw it across the room." That little girl will "graduate" from the program in May, having made what Betsy calls "tremendous progress." Another two-year-old child of a teenaged mother, who lives with her grandparents and attends high school, woke her mother up in the wee hours before an exam demanding that she read a story. In this household, Betsy says, regular home visits have influenced the entire family, providing structure in their lives and encouraging the mother/student to be the best she can be. "The best recommendation our program can have," Betsy says, "will come from parents who realize how much their child's success in school is a result of the teaching they learned with the help of their Home Visitor."

Betsy believes the pro-gram not only ensures a better academic future for the child; it also gives parents positive activities to share with their children, shows them that they get a better response than through harsh discipline, and, in the long run, creates a happier and better functioning family unit."

Friends of Miss Ruby's Kids Welcomes New Members

Since our December Newsletter, Miss Ruby's Kids has been fortunate enough to receive support from many new donors or "Friends." We are grateful to the following members of the Georgetown County community for their generous contributions:

New Members: Mary & Daniel Abel, Don & Carole Anderson, Amy Armstrong, Jack & Sylvia Bame, Jani Barbati, Nancy & John Bracken, Michael & Teresa Bronson, George Brown, Roddy & Fanny Brown, Howard & Anne Burgin, Alan & Katy Burrell, Louella Bushnell, Robert & Jill Callahan, Jimmy & Rebecca Chandler, William & Anne Chandler, William & Shirley Conner, Walter & JoAnn Dambman, John & Helen

Dawson, Ernie & Marion Dozzi, Robert & Marie DuBose, Yvonne Ellis, George & Barbara Ermentrout, Anne H. Floyd, Ann M. Floyd, James & Elizabeth Forrester, Kathy Gaskill, Wilhelmena Gibson, Jim & Betty Lou Hall, Mabel Hamilton, Herbert & Mildred Herrman, Robert & Leora Hileman, Caroline Hoffman, John & Jane Holloway, Nancy Hopkinson, Robert E. & Suzanne Jayroe, Lee B. Jones, Albert & Judith Keller, Katherine Kelly, Christina Southerland King, Daniel & Patricia Kowaleski, Doc & Martha Lachicotte, Mitchell & Ewa Laurance, Renee Lewis, Patricia Lewis, Pat Lively, Grace Long, Allan & Ann MacDonald, Richard & Pamela Mahany, Thomas & Carol Mather, Jason & Ann Mayhew, Kelly & Beth McCallister, Charles & Deborah Meade, Edward & Joyce Meldahl, John & Dorothea Mentzell, Lynn Miller, James & Gail Millett, Jo Ann Morgan, Gene & Betsy Nemeth, Mary & Brian Nisbet,



"Some in our community have barely enough resources to survive or have overwhelming problems and thus are unable to emphasize education to their

young children. Miss Ruby's Kids empowers the parents to be their child's first teacher. We can't think of a more effective program."

? Dan and Mary Abel

Pawleys Island Realty, Clay & Doris Pioth, Jean & Hazel Puyet, Rex & Myra Quigley, Maudest Rhue-Scott, James Rider, Charles & Pat Schooler, William & Beverly Smith, John & Eileen Snell, Bob & Peggy Stahlberger, Harold & Claudia Stowe, Jerome & Ella Thomas, Total Design, Inc., J.W. & Mabel Vervaat, Fritz & Luan Vinson, Walsh Krowka & Associates, Bill & Peggy Wilson, and Dave & Sallie Yoder. **Honorariums:** Carroll Roe & Family and Nancy Roe Gibson by Lee G. Brockington, Joyce Baird by Valerie Cole, Celina McGregor Vaughan by Helen Madden, and Helen Madden by Arthur & Brandy Madden. **Continuing Support:** Michael & Valerie Cole, Jo & Wally Fortuna, Alan & Billie Houghton, Pixie & Tom Kubeck, Betsy Marlow, Beth Wiley.

Special thanks go to Ginny Smith, President of Friends of the Waccamaw Library, Lee Brockington, Past President of FOWL, and the library's director, Carlethia Rudolph, for encouraging their compatriots who love books and value education to help Miss Ruby's Kids extend that joy in learning to some of Georgetown County's youngest citizens.



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