

Miss Ruby's Kids

Helping parents to inspire a passion for learning in their children

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“Smiles say it all:” A Miss Ruby’s Kids success story

Home Visitor Carolyn McBride has been working with 3-year-old Tyshawn in Andrews for almost two years. When she paid her first visit to his mother’s hair salon, “I realized he was young for his age,” she recalls.



Tyshawn, Carolyn remembers, was fidgety, couldn’t stay focused on the book or toy she was presenting that day. Perceiving his restlessness, Tyshawn’s mother became engaged, made each day’s lesson fun, and kept him on task. His mother’s energetic support and positive emphasis “worked like a charm,” Carolyn says. “You can always tell when parents work with their children between visits. She worked with Tyshawn every day; she participated in every visit.”

Tyshawn’s mother’s commitment to the Miss Ruby’s Kids program is evident in the way she scheduled her salon clients around the half hour dedicated to Tyshawn’s “home visit.” Now in his second year of the program, Tyshawn’s visits are held at Little Smurfs Daycare where he is enrolled. His mother comes during her lunch hour and before she goes to her second job as a school crossing guard, and Tyshawn has adapted well to this new routine.

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Carolyn was “pleasantly surprised” by Tyshawn’s progress in his first year. His baby habits disappeared as he started to understand and enjoy Carolyn’s stories. He identified with the characters – “that’s you, that’s me” – and was delighted when his mother and Carolyn congratulated him on getting a correct answer. This progress is even more noticeable in his second year. Now, she says, he is ready to go when she gets to Little Smurfs ; he remains fully focused for the entire visit.

“He is developing a new self-confidence,” she says.

For this success story, Carolyn credits a mother whose participation in the Miss Ruby’s Kids program has been welcoming and continually supportive. “She has been firm but gentle in setting parameters for Tyshawn during our visits and when working with him in between. And he loves to please her. When she praises him for learning a new word, he just beams!”

Tyshawn's mother "has been firm but gentle... and he loves to please her. When she praises him... he just beams!"

As Tyshawn approaches his “graduation” from Miss Ruby’s Kids, Carolyn says of his mother, “She knows what to do, where he is weak and needs a little extra help, and where he can do more with his language skills.” In her work with Tyshawn, Carolyn has fulfilled the mission of Miss Ruby’s Kids: to empower the parent to become her child’s first, best teacher.

From fidgety and unfocused to smiling self-confidence – Tyshawn has come a long way!

Book clubs “adopt” Miss Ruby’s Kids

Miss Ruby’s Kids has been fortunate in gaining the support of two area book clubs. Members of the Wachesaw #1 Book Club have, for the past several years, made gifts to organizations which encourage children to read. “We do this in December,” says club member Mary Floyd, “instead of giving each other Christmas presents.” This year, members “decided to contribute as a club to Miss Ruby’s Kids and support its mission of early childhood literacy.”

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Similarly, Beverly Smith of Happy Bookers, a club formed nine years ago in Heritage Plantation, says that her group strongly believes in the work being done by Miss Ruby’s Kids. “It’s never too early to teach children to love good books, and that is what Miss Ruby’s Kids is doing.” The Happy Bookers’ Christmas gift to Miss Ruby’s Kids will provide a year of toys and books for one of our participating children. “We hope our club’s gift will start a chain reaction and encourage many other local book clubs to support the wonderful work of Miss Ruby’s Kids,” Beverly says.

We at Miss Ruby’s Kids hope so too!

Your opinion needed

Have your say about this newsletter- visit our Web site, www.missrubyskids.net, and take the link to a brief survey. Ten questions and you're done!

If you have ideas that the survey doesn't cover, give us a call at 527-8560 – we want to please you.

Early education-done the right way

In one of her numerous editorials – this one picked up in January by The Sun News – nationally known education consultant Dorothy Rich writes:

“As the new year begins, all manner of lists get made. Among them, year after year, is the list of most needed educational reforms. There is one major educational reform that somehow always gets omitted from the list –and it's the top educational reform of them all: the family. It seems to make no difference that research study after study points to the crucial, determining influence of the family on children's achievement.”

Miss Ruby's Kids can point with pride to the fact that it is a “home and family based” program, deriving its structure and format from its parent organization, the nationwide Parent Child Home Program. During the two years that the two and three-year-old children receive literacy preparation from our Home Visitors, the child's parent or caregiver (and, in many cases other family members) are on hand for each visit and participate in the educational activities.

Rich's column continues: “A just issued report, The Family: America's Smallest School, from the Educational Testing Service finds that development and cognitive gaps begin well before children go to school and persist as they go through school. While schools are doing their job, the differences that

children bring with them from home continues.”

This statement bears out the philosophy on which the Parent Child Program is based: that even children who come from “at risk” settings can be successful in school if their families understand basic methods of fostering their intellectual development.

Rich's prescriptions for families who wish to promote their child's achievement in school reads like a page from the Miss Ruby's Kids “playbook.” She urges parents to, “Look around you to find real life education experiences. Extend and expand your child's curiosity. What is the shape of that cloud? What is under that rock?

Listen and talk with your child about what you see and find together. Conversation and language building are keys to life success. Provide for sensible routine and structure in your day. When do we read books? How long can we watch TV?”

These are exactly the principles and methods that Miss Ruby's Kids Home Visitors bring into the homes of the children they visit twice each week. In Georgetown County, SC, and within our small community of participating families, we are, to quote Rich's final statement, “chang(ing) education and ... chang(ing) the world, and we do it within our reach – in our own homes.”

Graduation wish list

Mark your calendars – *16 children will “walk” on May 18!* You're invited and you can help us fill their special backpacks with pencils, crayons, rulers and other school supplies.

Call the office, 527-8560, to coordinate purchases and to find out more. Members will receive invitations next month.



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Leading Children to Literacy