

HEAD START HAPPENINGS

HEAD START, INC. LAUNCHES NEWSLETTER

We are so excited about the launch of our new and improved Head Start newsletter. Each month, this newsletter will be distributed to more than 360 Head Start families, as well as thousands of volunteers and community supporters. Inside, you will learn all about Head Start and our activities for the month.

Families will receive this monthly newsletter in their child's backpacks, along with a special insert for classroom news as well as the monthly menu. Head Start volunteers and supporters can sign up to receive this letter electronically at billingsheadstart.org/newsletter-request/

In addition to our newsletter, you can learn more about all five of our sites on our website (billingsheadstart.org) or on our Facebook page (facebook.com/billingsheadstart). We serve Billings, Lockwood, Laurel, Joliet and Red Lodge — with lots of activities, volunteer opportunities and special events at each site, we want to make sure everyone has an opportunity to participate!

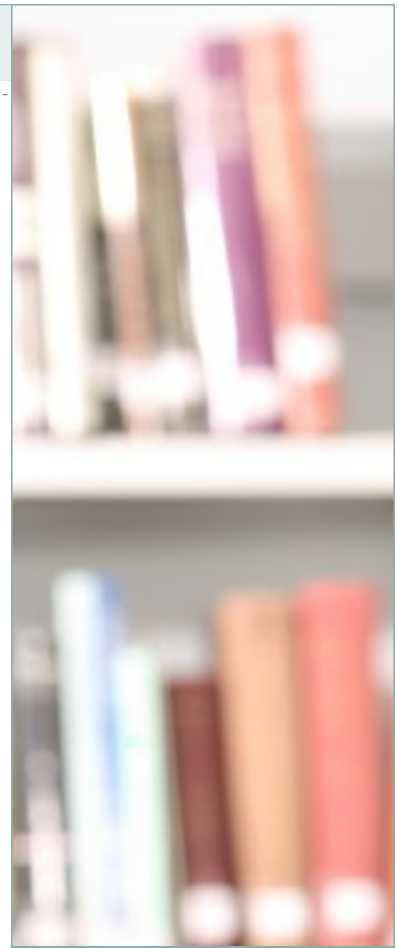
Over the coming year, we will be working to establish a presence on other social media platforms, including a blog, Twitter and Pinterest. Watch here for updates!

HEAD START PARTNERS WITH CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO HELP CHILDREN

As a part of our continued commitment to providing the highest quality of comprehensive school readiness services, Head Start, Inc. is pleased to announce a new partnership with the Center for Children and Families to provide mental health support to children and families in our program.

Good mental health is fundamental to school readiness — children who are dealing with trauma, challenging behaviors, or toxic stress are not able to learn as well and can face long-term consequences. Head Start works with parents to identify mental health needs in young children, as well as the families, and provide education, support, and training to address the challenges.

The Center for Children and Families is a behavioral health agency promoting safety, permanency, and well-being of children while strengthening families. The Center provides individual and family therapy, evaluations and assessments, parenting classes, training, support groups, and youth advocacy. Together, Head Start and The Center will work to ensure that child and family needs are met so that all children can have a greater opportunity for success in school.



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OUR MISSION

Head Start, Inc. provides comprehensive services for young children and their families to achieve school readiness and lifelong success.

OUR VISION

Encourage, Empower, and Educate All Children

OUR VALUES

Children First
Respect
Positivity
Empathy
Competence

FRIDAY FOOD PACK PROGRAM FOCUSES ON CHILD NUTRITIONAL NEEDS



In October, Head Start, Inc. launched a new service to support families and children in preparing for success in school. The Friday Food Pack program provides healthy, ready-to-eat foods for preschoolers facing food insecurity during the weekend.

In Montana, 48,000 children live in homes without reliable access to food. Young children are particularly affected by hunger and malnutrition—they demonstrate more behavioral issues, struggle to learn and develop skills, have more health issues, and higher rates of absenteeism in school.

To counteract this, Head Start, Inc. developed the Friday Food Pack program, designed to provide supplemental nutrition to

preschoolers. Families participating in the program receive a weekly delivery of nutritious, shelf-stable food for each child enrolled in Head Start to combat food insecurity during the weekend. Food Packs include fresh produce, whole grains, yogurts, proteins, and milk to help supplement meals provided in the home. Each Food Pack contains foods that support healthy development for preschoolers.

Head Start families in need of this service are urged to contact their family advocate.

Each Food Pack costs approximately \$7. If you would like to sponsor a Food Pack, or if you would like to volunteer for the program, please call Tera Clough at 245-7233.

Head Start, Inc. teachers are trained professionals—95% of classroom teachers have a four-year degree and 100% of teachers have college training in early childhood education.

COOKING CLASSES FOR HEAD START PARENTS

In partnership with the Montana State University Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, Head Start, Inc. is pleased to offer the continuing series of cooking classes for families, entitled *Eating Smart Being Active*.

These weekly cooking classes are offered at Head Start, free of charge, and feature free gifts, easy recipes, meal planning, cooking, tasting, and a free cookbook. Child care, including activities, is provided.

Classes are held on Tuesday evenings and begin on January 26, 2016. To register, please call Kathy at 869-1208. You can also register online by going to buyeatlivebetter.org and clicking on “Register for Nutrition Classes”.

HEALTH: THE FOUNDATION OF READINESS

Healthy children are ready to learn, and that’s why Head Start, Inc. takes its commitment to child health and wellness seriously. Health screenings and wellness education are a core component of the comprehensive services provided by Head Start programs.

Head Start employees work with families to establish medical and dental homes for their children, ensuring that regular wellness exams are completed and immunizations are up-to-date. All children in the program are screened for hearing, vision, speech, and child development, including social-emotional skills. Children are observed daily by classroom teachers and teaching assistants for signs of illness or injury. Parents are urged to share their observations of their child’s health and wellbeing with their teachers, to enable us to best serve the needs of each child in our program.

In the classroom, we work on healthy habits, like handwashing and tooth brushing, to support parents in teaching good personal hygiene. Mealtimes are an important time at Head Start—all our meals are served family style in the classroom, allowing children to serve themselves, try new foods, and practice good table manners. Meal times are a key teaching opportunity, as we engage children in conversation about the learning taking place in the classroom. **Parents and community volunteers are welcome to join us for mealtimes at Head Start—it is a great way to interact with children and see the program in action. Head Start employees who aren’t regularly in the classroom are also welcome to “buddy up” with a class for meal times.**

Beginning in January, we will once again be fortunate to have employees from **Anytime Fitness** volunteering their time to get kids in our program moving and exercising. Each classroom at our North Park site will have the opportunity to do age-appropriate fitness activities throughout January and February. We are so grateful for their generosity!

Head Start, Inc. is fortunate to have a registered nurse on staff who oversees our health program, providing a valuable resource to employees and parents in need of information on child health issues. Our health program is also guided by a Health Services Advisory Committee, comprised of community-based medical and dental professionals. Persons in the medical, dental, or mental health fields interested in serving on the HSAC should contact Janice King at 245-7233 for more information.



Hands-on exploration of real-world concepts helps preschoolers develop the skills needed for success in school and beyond. The garden is one example of children learning by doing.

IMPLEMENTING PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Classrooms at Head Start, Inc. are taking on a new challenge this year: engaging preschoolers in learning through in-depth studies or projects. By exploring real-world concepts in detail over a period of 3-5 weeks, we seek to strengthen the development of key school readiness skills such as creativity, curiosity, experimentation, language and vocabulary, imagination, and early math, literacy and science.

Guided by the evidence-based *Creative Curriculum for Preschoolers*, Head Start classrooms are taking a deep dive into age-appropriate topics such as balls, clothing, music, roads, and trees. The studies are designed to be child-driven, asking the students what they already know about the topic and then what they would like to learn. A Question of the Day guides the students in exploring each concept. During the first weeks of school, all classrooms used the “Beginning of the Year” study, designed to establish the routines and procedures of the classroom and engage students in making new friends. Then, each teacher has a variety of studies to choose from for the remainder of the year.

For example, many teachers chose to study Bread in December. Students learned what ingredients are used in making in bread, how bread is made, the varieties of breads used in different cultures or family traditions, bakers who make bread for a job, and the role of bread in restaurants (pizza!). Some classrooms made “monster bread” and played with play dough made from bread. Teachers read a variety of books about bread to the students, including the beloved “The Gingerbread Man”. Bread serves as a theme and fun foundation for stories, math, music, science, social studies, art and more in each of the Creative Curriculum studies.

The year will come to a close in May with “Getting Ready for Kindergarten,” helping children and families make a smooth transition into kindergarten, and focusing on transitions and adjusting to change generally for younger children in the program.

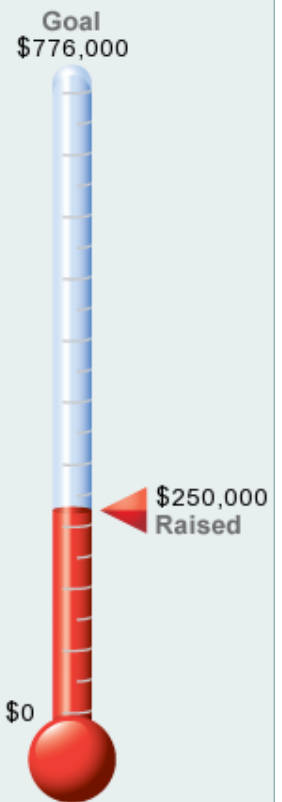
Parents, ask your child what he or she is studying at school, and get involved with each study at home by doing the activities your child’s teacher sends home each month.

HELP US HELP KIDS!

Every year, Head Start, Inc. must raise \$776,000 in cash and in-kind services to deliver needed help to preschool children. We count on community support to help prepare young children for success in school.

As of Dec. 31, 2015, we are just about a third of the way to our annual goal. Here is how you can help:

- Volunteer in the classroom
- Deliver Friday Food Packs
- Donate gas cards, gift cards, and gently used clothes/shoes to help families in need.
- Volunteer for Germ Annihilators on Saturdays
- Be a sponsor for our Rock2Raise concert



EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

- ⇒ **Meghan Ascheman** and **Sandra Caufield** completed a training seminar on behavior management in November.
- ⇒ **Janice King** and **Jennifer Thorson** completed “Making the Transition Staff to Supervisor” training in December.

HELP WANTED

- ⇒ **TEACHER (North Park):** Must have four-year degree in elementary or early childhood education.
- ⇒ **TEACHING ASSISTANT (Lockwood):** Must have high school diploma/GED + 1 year experience in early childhood setting.
- ⇒ **SUBSTITUTES NEEDED (All Sites):** Substitute bus drivers and classroom teachers needed. Requirements vary.

For complete details, visit billingsheadstart.org/employment-opportunities

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

- ◇ January 18, 2016: No School, All-Staff Training
- ◇ January 22 & 25: Head Start teachers tour Yellowstone Art Museum
- ◇ February 8: Chinese New Year Cultural Celebration
- ◇ February 8-19 : Teachers will be conducting home visits for Head Start families
- ◇ February 12-15: Program Closed—Winter Break
- ◇ March 5– April 3: Children’s artwork on display at the Yellowstone Art Museum
- ◇ March 25-28: Program Closed– Spring Break
- ◇ March 31: Reception at the YAM for Head Start families
- ◇ May 2: Hawaiian and Polynesian Cultural Celebration
- ◇ May 19: Last Day of School!
- ◇ May 20: Staff Appreciation Day

Head Start, Inc.
615 N. 19th St.
Billings, MT 59105

Serving Billings, Lockwood, Laurel,
Joliet, and Red Lodge

Phone: 406-245-7233
info@billingsheadstart.org

