

HEAD START HAPPENINGS

HEAD START CELEBRATES START OF YEAR

On August 30, 2016, Head Start Inc. welcomed 360 new and returning students to our program. This program year represents big changes for our agency, as it is the first year we have begun to offer full-day (seven-hour) classes. Over the next few years, Head Start will transition its entire program to full-day classes.

This year is also special as it marks our 45th program anniversary! Special events will be held throughout the year, and a special volunteer challenge will take place also (*see below*).

While some things are changing, parents and families can rest assured that the high-quality early childhood education they have come to expect from Head Start will still be the hallmark of our program. We will continue our work to partner with families to prepare young children for success in school, developing foundational skills and abilities that are necessary for kindergarten. Our curriculum continues to be study-based, meaning that we will select a topic of interest to children, like trees or pets, and spend four to six weeks learning all about that topic. Parents are encouraged to support that learning in the home through targeted activities provided by classroom teachers.

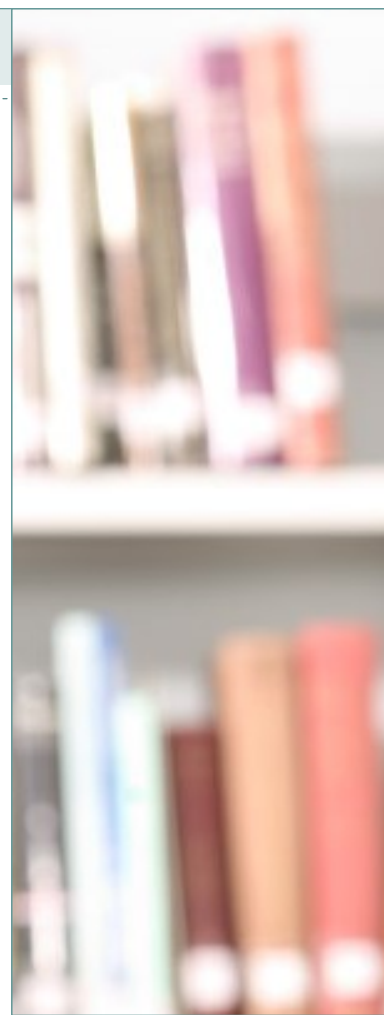
Head Start, Inc. will also continue to support and embrace families as they work to provide a stable and loving home for their children. In Spring 2017, Head Start, Inc. will launch a new Strengthening Families program, providing parenting classes and supports through a research-based program known as *Incredible Years*.

As always, we begin our year humbled by the opportunity to be a part of the lives of 360 children and their families. We are grateful for the trust placed in us by the community to shape young minds, and thankful for the hundreds of volunteers and donors that support those efforts. If you would like to volunteer for Head Start, Inc., you can find more information inside this newsletter.

PARENT VOLUNTEER CHALLENGE ANNOUNCED

As part of the agency's 45th Anniversary celebration, Head Start is challenging parents to volunteer 45 hours in our program between Aug. 30, 2016 and May 12, 2017. For every 45 hours volunteered, parents (and other family members who volunteer) will receive a raffle ticket for a chance to win a **year of free groceries and gas!**

Volunteer activities include completing activities on your child's study calendar sent home by teachers, volunteering in the classroom, chaperoning field trips, participating in Parent Committee meetings and helping teachers prepare the classroom each day. For more information, talk with your child's teacher, your family advocate, or contact Tera Clough at 869-1220.



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MISSION

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

VISION

Encourage, Empower, and Educate All Children

VALUES

Children First
Respect
Positivity
Empathy
Competence



CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Support from the community is essential to Head Start—children benefit from the generous gift of time that adults can offer, families benefit from support and mentoring by community organizations, and the program benefits by serving more children than we could do alone.

Volunteers are always needed in our program—now more than ever. Our program must raise nearly \$800,000 annually from local sources—including volunteer hours. We welcome individuals, families, business groups and community organizations into our program. Volunteer opportunities include:

- Spending time in the classroom with one child or a small group of children;
- Teaching classes to families;
- Sharing special skills, cultural events, or learning opportunities with classes;
- Improving our playgrounds and play spaces;
- Packing and delivering food packs to families in need;
- Sorting and tracking inventory; and
- Assisting teachers in preparing classrooms or handling administrative tasks.

If you or your organization is interested in volunteering, contact us at 869-1220.

WHAT IS KINDERGARTEN READINESS?

The Office of Head Start (OHS) defines school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life.

Here at Head Start, Inc., we work with families every day to develop the foundational skills that children will need to successfully enter kindergarten. While the public often thinks of preschool as time to learn the ABCs and 123s, school readiness is much more than that.

Our highly qualified and trained classroom staff develop individual goals for each one of the 360 children in our program, focused on building independence and self-help, problem-solving and creativity, motor skills and coordination, vocabulary, early math skills, initiative, resiliency, and

much more. We work on good nutrition and food choices, healthy habits and proper hygiene, and self-regulation skills to manage emotions and behaviors.

Preschool is a special and important time in a child's development. Parents, as their child's first and most enduring teacher, guide our work through regular feedback and communication, so that we are all partnered together to ensure our children are ready for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Head Start, Inc. welcomes parents and community members to volunteer in our program to support school readiness. Reading to children, playing simple games, and simply giving one-on-one attention to each child helps children develop and grow.

TRIBAL CULTURE CELEBRATED AT HEAD START

During the week of September 26, 2016, Head Start children studied and celebrated the American Indian culture. Students experienced traditional foods, arts and crafts, music and more in the classroom, benefitting from the generous donations of time and materials from Native families and community members.

On Sept. 28, the program hosted a family fun night, featuring the Soaring Eagles dancers and Native drummers. More than 400 people attended the evening, which also included a welcome from Billings Mayor Tom Hanel and a recognition of the 45th Anniversary of the Head Start program in Billings.



During the week of Oct. 31, Head Start, Inc. will celebrate and explore the Latino culture, including a study of Día de los Muertos, the Day of the Dead. Families are invited to participate in classroom activities and in a Family Fun Night, scheduled for Nov. 2.

PARENTS: PARTICIPATE IN PARENT COMMITTEE

Head Start programs across the nation operate under a model of shared governance, where parents have a substantive and meaningful role in shaping the direction of Head Start programs. Parents can do this through being elected to Policy Council or by participating in parent committees.

Parent committees give all the parents at a site the opportunity to learn more about the program, provide input and feedback on the direction of the program, and plan events that are important to families. Parents with children enrolled at Head Start, Inc. are encouraged to participate in our agency's parent committees. Each site—North Park, Laurel, and Lockwood — has its own parent committee. All parents at each site are members of the parent committee and encouraged to attend.

Information on the first parent committee meeting of the year at your site will be provided soon. This is your chance to shape Head Start—see you all there!



Head Start, Inc. has a waiting list of more than 130 students this year—and with more families seeking to enroll every day. Your contribution of time or materials, or a monetary donation, can help us grow to meet this demand!

ATTENDANCE MATTERS!

One of the most important things that parents, grandparents, and family members can do to help a young child be ready for success in school is to ensure regular attendance in Head Start or preschool.

Young children thrive on predictable routines, so creating the habit early of getting up and going to school every day ensures that children develop the skills they need to be successful. Make sure that you are letting your child make appropriate choices. For example, a preschooler can decide what to wear to school, but deciding whether or not to go to school is a choice only adults can make. Giving your child appropriate boundaries and choices helps him feel secure and happy.

In the month of September, Head Start, Inc. students had a **92% attendance rate**, which is great. But we can do better! Talk with your children about how important education is to you. Ask your child about his or her day, so that she knows you are interested in her activities. If your child often seems reluctant to attend, talk with your classroom teacher to problem-solve.

Children learn and grow best if they regularly attend school. Give your child the encouragement he needs to have the best preschool experience possible!



ATTENDANCE MATTERS MONTANA

- ◆ Children chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.
- ◆ By 6th grade, chronic absence is a proven early warning sign for students at risk for dropping out of school.
- ◆ By 9th grade, good attendance can predict graduation rates even better than 8th grade test scores.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

- ⇒ Welcome aboard to our new employees! We are so happy to have you join the Head Start team.
- ⇒ Congratulations to Lockwood Teaching Assistant **Barb Sunderland**, who begins her 41st year this year in Head Start.
- ⇒ Congratulations to **Karin Fitzgerald**, who has been promoted from Family Advocate to Education Director.
- ⇒ Congratulations to **Brittney Dupea**, who has been promoted from Teaching Assistant to Teacher at our Laurel site.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

- ◇ Oct. 19: CPR/First Aid Class for Parents, 4 p.m.
- ◇ Oct. 19: ISeeAbility Class for Parents —helping children with sensory disorders, 6 p.m., North Park
- ◇ Oct. 20: No School—All Sites
- ◇ Oct. 24: New Policy Council Convenes
- ◇ Oct. 25: North Park Parent Committee, 4:30 p.m.
- ◇ Oct. 27: Clothing Giveaway, North Park
- ◇ Oct. 31 Halloween (*parents, please remember no costumes or sugary treats in the classroom*).
- ◇ Oct. 31—Nov. 3: Latino Cultural Celebration
- ◇ Nov. 1: Budgeting for Families; 12:00 p.m. or 4 p.m.
- ◇ Nov. 2: Family Fiesta—Celebrate *Dia de los Muertos* with us!
- ◇ **Nov. 8: Election Day—Get Out and Vote!**
- ◇ Nov. 17: Johnson & Johnson Health and Dental Class, 10:00 a.m. or 5:30 p.m., North Park

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