

# **SMART BEGINNINGS**

RECEIVED APR - 4 2011



# Smart Beginnings Western Tidewater Newsletter



## SBWT Happenings ...

- In November SBWT had a booth at the Business Expo held at the Workforce Development Center. We were pleased at the number of people we were able to share our message with. We also gave out flashlights and almost 500 children's books!
- SBWT is growing! In January our office moved to the Franklin Business Incubator on Mechanic Street. We are excited to have more space and more room for business meetings! Stop by and see us, Suite 203!
- The Smart Beginnings Collaboration (SBC) continues to work on existing programs and create new, innovative ideas to sustain the work of Smart Beginnings Western Tidewater. This collaboration brings the Results Leaders together to align and accelerate existing programs and develop new strategies to meet the needs of the children within the Western Tidewater community. The SBC utilizes the research-based Results Based Accountability Model in the work that is being done throughout

Western Tidewater through, the Results Leadership meetings. This model has been effective in assisting the committees to gain an understanding of the importance of collaborating and working together.

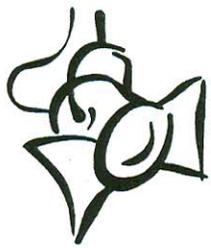


Volume 2, Issue 2

March 2011

### Inside this issue:

SBWT Happenings	1
Spotlight	1
News from the Executive Director	2
A Word from the Board President	2
Booster Funds Supporting EC Initiative	2
Parent Tips	3
VSQI Professional Development Day	3
Ready Communities	3
Why Businesses Should Support Early Childhood	4



## Spotlight

Rebecca Brown began with SBWT in January as a Child Health Insurance Outreach Worker. Rebecca identifies children and pregnant women in Western Tidewater who are uninsured, to assist them in signing up with FAMIS or Medicaid. Rebecca has over

30 years of experience with the Department of Social Services in Chesapeake. We are excited to have Rebecca and look forward to helping more children in WT, using her experience and assistance! Welcome Rebecca!



## News from the Executive Director

It is such a pleasure to be a part of Smart Beginnings Western Tidewater! SBWT is committed to helping children and families across Western Tidewater enter school healthy and ready to learn. It is this commitment that brings so many agencies and organizations to the table to help with our efforts. We work closely with many organizations throughout Isle of Wight County, The City of Franklin and Southampton County to bring about change for our



Ellen Couch

future leaders and workforce. Preparing children for school and life begins at birth. Reading to children, talking with children, and helping children discover the world around them is so important in helping to prepare them for school.

1 in 5 is not prepared for kindergarten and 9,000 students will repeat a grade between kindergarten and third

grade. These retentions cost taxpayers roughly \$80 million across the state. High quality preschool instruction is critical to ensure that our state and country have a strong and capable workforce not only in Virginia, but also across the country.

Our children are our future and we have to give them the necessary skills and opportunities to have them healthy and ready to learn. Please join us in our efforts to help every child enter school ready to begin their future.

## A Word from the Board President

"There is a time for planting and a time to reap what is sewn." It is hard to believe that spring has sprung, and as I see the farmers preparing the fields and planting, I think about SBWT and all of the hard work that has been done to prepare the "fields" for planting the idea that young children are so like those seeds the farmers are getting ready to plant. The farmers spend a great deal of time and energy preparing before the first seed is planted. They have to first decide what seeds to plant, and then which of those seeds will have the greatest yield. Then there is the task of preparing the ground for the seeds to make sure all of the nutrients

will be there for the seeds to grow and develop into strong plants that will bear the best of fruits. Then, from the time the first seed cracks the earth with tender shoots of new life, the farmer constantly monitors each plant to ensure their growth and decide if there are signs of more nurturing needed. They examine the plants for disease and the need for weeding, and they make adjustments and take actions to reduce any harm that may come to plants. Of



Martha Kello

course, nature has a great influence on the plants' development, but even some of that can be altered by the farmer

through things such as irrigation and chemical treatments. Finally, comes the harvest and a measure of the yield! However, the farmers' work does not stop, for they immediately begin to plan for the next spring by studying their yield; they search for new research developments, new techniques, new seeds, to make sure their next crop will be even better than the last. The work never ends!

SBWT has only begun! We celebrate the successes of each seed and look toward

## Booster Funds to Support Local Early Childhood Initiative

The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) in conjunction with the Office of Early Childhood Development, has awarded \$17,950 in supplementary Virginia Star Quality Initiative (VSQI) booster funds to SBWT. The funds are specified for early childhood development projects to expand the VSQI in the local area during the period of January-June 2011. VSQI is a voluntary program that assesses, improves and communicates the level of qual-

ity in early child care and education settings. "We are impressed with local efforts to support and enhance the quality of childcare in Virginia Communities," said Mylinda Moore, MSW, Senior Program Officer with the VECF. "These booster funds were awarded as a supplement to an existing VECF grant to SBWT. We are excited to offer additional funds to support innovative school readiness programs and services that will help the region's

young children be successful in school and in life."



## Parent Tip: Everyday Reading Opportunities

What is one of the most important things we all need to know how to do, to survive in life? How many of you thought of reading? Reading helps us not only in school, but also in everyday life. From traffic signs to warning signs, reading for life is vital. And it is NEVER too early to begin reading to your child. As soon as your child is born, start reading to him or her! As your child grows and is able, allow him or her to help you hold the book and turn the pages. Be certain to point to the words

as you read. This will teach your child how we read from left to right and top to bottom. Use expression. Ask your child to echo read or repeat after you as you read through the book. Read much and read often! Finding the time is essential, and not at all difficult!

Following are some tips from kidshealth.org that show just how easy it is to find opportunities to read with your child each and every day:

- Read on car trips, on errands, during waits in checkout lines and doc-

tor's offices.

- Keep books or magazines in your car, diaper bag, or backpack.
- Read in the morning, after dinner, at bath time, and at bed time.
- Encourage your child to spend time with a book instead of the TV or video game.

It's never too young, or too old, to enjoy reading! Now, go grab a good book!



## Virginia Star Quality Initiative Professional Development Day

Teachers, mentors, area supervisors, and the SBWT staff gathered at PDCCC Workforce Development Center for a day of Staff Development on February 2, 2011.

Participants were welcomed by Ellen Couch, Executive Director of BWT, and participated in a collaboration exercise to encourage the importance of working together and fostering collaboration in their own classrooms. Couch also highlighted achievements, current projects, and upcoming events of Smart Beginnings Western Tidewater.

Courtney Truitt from The Planning Council presented a session to help parents and providers understand temperament.

Movement and Music with Dr. Jennifer Cary, wrapped up the last session of the morning. Participants received the book, *follow me too: a handbook of movement activities for three-to-five-year-olds* by, Marianne Tolbert and Lynne



Schneider, to take back to their classrooms with movement activities for preschool-aged children. A scavenger hunt and balloon game was used to highlight various activities in the book and get everyone up and moving.

Dr. Anne Bruhel and Toni John-

son of the Children's Center presented the afternoon session regarding social emotional behaviors of children. Information focused on the importance of teacher-child relationships and interactions, and the development of young children. Techniques and tips focused on creating positive experiences for children and the lasting effects of building these bonds. They wrapped up their session with information about the ABC Project, which is a free service for caregivers of infants and toddlers in the Western Tidewater locality, and contact information for enrollment.

The staff development day came to a close with remarks from Ellen Couch and an evaluation of the day. It was a great day of training, door prizes, and collaboration!

## Highlights from Ready Communities

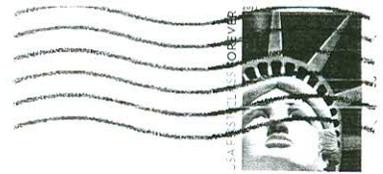
The Ready Communities committee gave presentations to all local governing bodies: City of Franklin, Isle of Wight County, and Southampton County. We shared with each locality the progress of Smart Beginnings Western Tidewater and thanked them

for their support. As we head into Spring,



we hope to have the opportunity to speak to parents at the local elementary PTA meetings and local churches and share what programs Smart Beginnings is sponsoring throughout our area.

RICHMOND VA 232  
01 APR 11 20:04 4T



SMART  
BEGINNINGS

Western Tidewater

601 North Mechanic Street  
Suite 203  
Franklin, VA 23851

Phone: 757-562-8511  
Fax: 757-562-0261  
E-mail: [ecouch@franklinva.com](mailto:ecouch@franklinva.com)

*Our Mission: All children enter school  
healthy and ready to learn.*



Mr. Mike Johnson  
Southampton Cty. Administrator  
P. O. Box 400  
Courtland, VA 23837

23837+0400



---

### Why Support Early Childhood?

Early childhood development and economic growth—they share a connection we can't afford to ignore. Decades of study clearly indicate that achievement of the latter is all but impossible without adequate attention to the former.

It's a fact so simple, we sometimes fail to grasp the enormity of its significance: today's children will become tomorrow's adults—and tomorrow's workforce. All that happens to Virginia's children in the years from birth to age 5 is certain to have an indelible impact on their future and long-lasting repercussion in their communities.

If our children are going to become productive citizens, the continued support of parents, care-providers, educators, and medical professionals remains essential. But something more is needed: the insistent, committed voices of Virginia's business community.

As business leaders, you know first-hand the value of a strong and capable workforce. And you know all too well the costs when so many are unprepared physically, emotionally or intellectually to contribute in the workplace and to the economic prosperity of Western Tidewater.

We can't pause our children's future. Join with us as we seize this opportunity to roll-up our sleeves and work together to achieve long-term prosperity for Western Tidewater. Let's get down to business!!