

We're on the Web!!  
www.mchs-ehs.org



**Mercer County Head Start / Early Head Start**

1901 Memorial Drive  
Farrell, PA 16121

Tel: 724-346-4482  
Fax: 724-346-4431



**Calling all Parents and/or Guardians:**

Please remember to volunteer in the classroom. If you volunteer in December and January you will be given an extra Chinese Auction ticket for our January Center Meeting at the Olympic Fun Center.



**"Winter Storm Warning Tips"**

When a winter storm warning is issued, avoid traveling by car, but if you must:

- Carry a Disaster Supplies Kit in the trunk
- Keep your car's gas tank full for emergency use and to keep the fuel line from freezing.
- Let someone know your destination, your route and when you expect to arrive.
- If you get stranded on an unfamiliar road, don't panic, pull your car as far to the right side of the road as possible so its out of the way of traffic.
- Put on your emergency brake and your hazard warning lights.
- If you are a member of a roadside assistance service like AAA, call them on your cell phone.
- If you think you need police help, carefully exit the car and raise the hood as a distress signal, tie a scarf or sock to the antenna or door handle, and call 911.
- If you don't have a cell phone or your phone isn't working, don't accept a ride from another driver. Ask the other driver to call 911 for you.

**To All Parents!!!**

Our program is a recipient of the United Way Day of Caring campaign for 2008-2009. Several local agencies will be donating hats and mittens for our HS/Pre-K children to have during the winter months.



Thanks to a great local community!!!



**Important Dates to Remember**

**Winter Break for Head Start Students Begins:**

December 22, 2008—January 2, 2009

**Classes resume Monday, January 5, 2009**

**Winter Break for Pre-K Counts Begins:**

December 24, 2008-January 2, 2009

**Classes resume Monday, January 5, 2009**

**Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start Policy**

**Council Meeting:**

When: January 6, 2009

Where: Farrell Area School District (Board Room)

Time: 10:00 a.m.

**January Center Committee Meeting:**

When: Tuesday, January 13, 2009

Where: Olympic Fun Center

4070 East State Street

Hermitage, Pa. 16148

Time: 5:30—7:30 p.m.

More information will be sent home soon.

**You may reach your Family**

**Advocate by calling:**

Waynetta Austin: (724)342-3734 x 15

Marsha Barr: (724)342-3734 x 20

Michelle Comstock: (724)342-3734 x 16

Jennifer Gottberg: (724)342-3734 x 17

Shirley Reagle: (724)662-0170 x 14

Karla Stanton: (724)662-0170 x 13

Michelle Zager: (724)342-3734 x 18

**Parents/Guardians:**

**During the winter season, please tune in to your local T.V. or radio station for school closing or delays.**

**"Just a Thought"**

**Mothers are like fine China**

As years go by,

They increase in value.



**UNITY NEWSLETTER**  
**Mercer County Head Start / Early Head Start**

A Community Action Partnership of Mercer County Program; affiliated with the Farrell Area School District

Winter 2008

Volume 4 Issue 2

Serving the Children and Families of Mercer County ages Birth to 5

**"A B Cs & 1 2 3s Earlier Is Not Better"**

Many parents are concerned when their children aren't learning letters and numbers. They feel ditto sheets and homework in the preschool programs will prepare their children for elementary school. We could give your children workbooks, make them memorize the alphabet, drill them, and test them. But we know that if we do, your children are going to lose something very important. Children who are rushed into reading and writing too soon miss important steps in learning and may suffer later on because they lack the foundation they need for using language

Children who are taught to read in preschool may be able to sound out and recognize words, but they may also have little understanding of what they are reading. If they haven't been given time to play, they won't have explored object enough to know words (like "hard, harder, hardest") mean. If they aren't allowed to string beads, button, dress up, cut, paste, pour and draw, they won't develop the small muscle skills they need for writing.

Math involves more than memorizing facts (like 2+2=4), it involves logical thinking. Children shouldn't be pushed into paper and pencil arithmetic too soon. To acquire the foundation for logical thinking, children need many opportunities to count objects, sort them into piles, and add some to a pile and take some away. It is by playing games like these that they learn to truly understand addition, subtraction, division and multiplication. Without these concrete experiences, children may give correct answers but probably won't understand what they are doing and why.

Worst of all, if children are rushed into academic subjects too soon, they may lose their enthusiasm for learning and lose their sense of themselves as learners. Children who are given plenty of time to play however, learn to ask their own questions and figure out their own answers. They are responsible for their own learning. They see themselves as explorers, discoverers, problem solvers and inventors.



**"Toy-Buying Guidelines"**

Millions, upon millions of dollars will be spent this holiday season on toys. Well-meaning parents and other adults will invade toy stores, discount houses and other stores that already have their shelves well stocked for the onslaught of buyers. Fortunately, many of the buyers will use good judgment in choosing toys, but there will be some, as there are every year, who don't take toy buying seriously. As a result of this adult negligence, some children will be hurt by their toys, while many more will become frustrated and bored. Here are a few reminders to think about when shopping for toys:

- \* Select a toy very carefully. A toy should be appropriate for the child's age and development.
- \* Read and follow the warnings that some toys carry on the label and/or toy.
- \* Be extremely cautious about giving a child an electronically operated toy or chemistry set. or like toy.
- \* Avoid buying toys that produce excessively loud noises.
- \* Read the labels of toys that have fabric parts. Look for words like "nonflammable," "flame resistant," or "washable" on stuffed toys and dolls.
- \* Remember that a child will not use a toy in only one way. Children are creative and curious.



# Staff Spotlight

## Vickie Bucker

Vickie Bucker was born in Sharon, Pa. and adopted at three days old by her wonderful parents. She is a graduate of West Middlesex High School. Vickie began working in mid April of 2008 as a part-time data entry person for the Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start/Pre-K Counts Programs.

Vickie has the responsibility of calling classroom substitute teachers and assistants for all 29 classrooms. She is also employed for George White properties and is the treasurer of the West Middlesex Presbyterian church which she attends on a regular basis.

Vickie resides in Hermitage with her husband and two daughters. She is a very spiritual woman, her interests include singing in the church's choir and as a soloist, watching wildlife, such as birds and squirrels; and spending "girl" time with her daughters.



### "SOCIAL SERVICE"

#### Do You Need Help Paying Your Heating Bill

If you need help paying your heating bills, or have a heating emergency....LIHEAP May Be Able To Help You.

What is LIHEAP? The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, it helps low-income families pay their heating bills. To receive help you don't have to be on public assistance, you don't need to have an unpaid heating bill and you can either rent or own your home.

How to apply?

- Online at [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us)
- Call the Statewide LIHEAP Hotline at 1-866-857-7095 or TDD for the hearing impaired 1-800-451-5886
- Applications are available at your local county assistance office.

To apply, you will need:

- Names of people in your household, dates of birth for all household members and social security numbers.
- Proof of income for all household members and a recent heating bill.

You will receive a written notice that will tell you if you qualify and the amount of your grant.

### NUTRITION "KIDS IN THE KITCHEN"

#### "Monkey Mix"

Ingredients:

- 1 Cup dried banana chips
- 1 Cup flaked coconut
- 1 Cup Chocolate chips
- 3 Cups Cheerios

Mix all the ingredients in a gallon-size zip-top bag. Shake well. Yield: 6 cups. Make 12 servings

This recipe is not intended for infants and young toddlers.

#### "Banana Muffins"

- 4 Cups biscuit mix
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 medium eggs
- 2/3 cup of milk
- 1 1/2 cup bananas, mashed



Mix all ingredients with a mixer on medium speed. Spray muffin tins with cooking spray. Pour muffin mix into greased tins and bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. Make 20 muffins.

### "SOCIAL SERVICE"

#### Do You Need A Helping Hand with Your Water Bill?

Contact the Aqua Pennsylvania, Inc.'s low-income assistance program. The program is designed to enable low-income customers to make manageable monthly payment on their water account. Helping Han can help you continue to make payments-and make sure your water service isn't shut off. If you think you might be eligible for Helping Hand, call 1-800-360-2998. If you have any questions, please call Aqua at 877-987-2782.

### "RECRUITMENT"

#### Now Enrolling for the 2008-2009 Program Year

The Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start Program is asking for your help. It's time to recruit children and families for next school year and you are our most valuable source of locating future families.

Hopefully, you are having a wonderful experience in our program this year and are willing to recommend us to family members and friends. Be sure to share your child's educational experiences and the activities that we offer to parents and families throughout the year. Current parents' positive experiences are our best advertising.

Remember our program provides services to pregnant women and children birth to age five throughout Mercer County and it's free to income eligible families. We also over-see the Pre-K Counts Program. If you know of someone that would be interested. Have them contact the main office at 1-866-284-1059 extension 1323 or 1381.

We also accept applications for enrollment on our website: <http://www.mchs-ehs.org>

**Parents: Don't forget to spend quality fun time with your children this holiday season.**

### "PARENT INVOLVEMENT"

#### Congratulations Parents

Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start sponsored a family home project, called "Make a Date for Dinner". Every family that turned in a plate was entered into the drawing for a gift certificate at the Cianci's Restaurant and the Golden Corral. The winners are Rebecca Shannon's family from Greenville 1 (Cianci's Restaurant Gift certificate) and Gavin Whalen's family from Hermitage 2 (Golden Corral Gift Certificate).

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#### Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Committee News !!!!!

The following parents have been elected to serve on the Head Start Policy Committee for 2008-2009 Program Year: Amy Ceremuga, Jennifer Wheaton, Patricia Norris, Michelle Miller, Eileen Thompson, Kelle Ohl, Jennifer Mellott, Sara Babcock, Ashley Sternthal, Amber Nicholas, Tracy McFadden, Daniel Jones; alternates, Doug Wheaton, Lulu Bennett, Darla Oliver, Tyler Babcock and Rebecca Johnson. **Congratulations!!!!**

#### Tips for Reducing Holiday Stress

The holidays can be an especially stressful time of year, filled with unreal expectations for a perfect holiday. Listed below are tips for reducing holiday stress:

- Create realistic expectations
- Learn to say "no" to extra obligations
- Take short relaxation breaks to let go of tension.
- Get involved in a volunteer activity

where you help others.

- Tap into your natural creativity and create a home-made gift.
- Eat & drink sensibly; get plenty of exercise and sleep
- Stick to a budget. No credit cards
- Reflect on the deeper meaning of the holiday (family tradition/spiritual).

### Winter Outdoor

#### Play

Children need time to play outside every day, (except when it is raining or extremely cold). Children attending Head Start engage in outdoor play on a daily basis.. To ensure the comfort of your child please:

- ◆ Dress your child warmly in layers of clothing for outside play.
- ◆ Make sure your child has a hat. An uncovered head loses body heat.
- ◆ Make sure your child has a pair of gloves or mittens.
- ◆ If your child engage in outdoor play at home, make sure there is adult supervision.

### Frostbite

Frostbite occurs when body tissue essentially freezes after exposure to extreme cold. Children are at greater risk because their body heat escapes more easily and because they may be less prone to coming inside when it's freezing. Symptoms of frostbite include pain, burning numbness and eventually a complete loss of sensation in the affected body part. The hands and feet are most commonly affected by frostbite.

African American men and women are slightly more prone to develop frostbite than Caucasians. Other people who may be predisposed to frostbite are those of Arabic descent and those who reside in warm climates.

What to do if frostbite occurs:

- Get your child inside immediately if you notice fingers, cheeks ears, lips, nose or toes that are turning white.
- Take off all wet clothes.
- Get into a warm room as soon as possible and cover the person or area in warm blankets.
- Avoid walking on frostbitten feet or toes to avoid serious tissue damage.
- Immerse the areas affected by frostbite in warm (not hot) water.
- Avoid rubbing or massaging the affected area as this can cause further damage. Do not use anything hot, such as a heating pad, stove, or furnace, to warm the affected area, as these areas are numb and may burn easily due to lack of sensation.