

South Carolina First Steps e-Spotlight

February 12, 2016



“It Takes a Village...”: McCormick First Steps Leverages the Power of Community Volunteers

In this week's spotlight we feature McCormick First Steps and their successful efforts to engage members of their community in serving children and families. Read on to learn about the work happening in McCormick County:

Run entirely by the efforts of volunteers, McCormick First Steps' Library Literacy program currently serves 65 children from the partnership's childcare center and Head Start classrooms. This program focuses on improving the children's language and literacy skills in a variety of ways, including through interactive Read Alouds, exploring new ways to learn letters and vocabulary, and exposure to songs and rhymes. Twice a month, the director of McCormick Public Library reads stories and completes literacy-based activities with the children. At each session, all participating children receive their own book to take home and read with their families. As a new component of the program, this year children also receive instruction on the use of sign language, which helps to increase their communication skills and knowledge of the alphabet. To assess the results of this program, the teachers and child care providers periodically evaluate the children on listening skills, with the goal of those skills improving during the course of the year.

In addition, McCormick First Steps believes that exposing children to music through this program will build their early literacy skills and increase language development. Two times a month, a music teacher engages the children in music, songs, and rhymes. The program has brought in many volunteer musicians from the local community, including a drummer, a bass player, two guitar players, an accordion and saxophone player, and a keyboard player. Not only have the musicians come to play for the children, they also teach the children about the music and even let them touch (and attempt to play) their instruments.

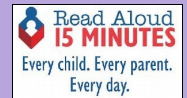
In further demonstrating the power of volunteers for McCormick County First Steps, a group of women from the Lutheran Church by the Lake who call themselves the “First Steps Circle”, read twice a month to the babies and toddlers in the child care center. These women, in addition to helping provide the music mentioned above, plan special field trips and events for the children in the center. They have taken the children on field trips to the library playground, the Arts Council Park, the fire station, the church nativity scene, and to Emerald Farms in Greenwood, and have provided lunch and transportation with these outings. They have also planned scavenger hunts, pajama and pizza parties, and, recently, a “Move Your Body” event in the gym.

During the past holiday season, the members of the Lutheran Church made hand-knitted hats, scarves, and quilts for every child in the child care center and all 16 children served in McCormick's Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. In addition, the church members provided JOY boxes for families in the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) program. Each box was filled with clothes, blankets, books, toys and baby items for the new mothers and babies in the program. Approximately 35 NFP families received JOY boxes including participating families from McCormick, Edgefield, Saluda and Abbeville counties.

Through donating their time and talents, McCormick County First Steps volunteers are exposing children to new ways to learn and letting families know that people in their community care. The efforts of McCormick County First Steps' volunteers truly shows a community working together to build a successful future for their youngest learners.

Opportunities:

Read Aloud
15 Minutes



Read Aloud 15 Minutes is a non-profit organization that is working to make reading aloud to children every day for at least 15 minutes the new standard in child care. Upon signing up for their Read Aloud campaign, you gain access to fun and informative visual content, in Spanish and English, to help remind parents of the importance of daily reading aloud starting at birth. It's free— all you have to do is share the organization's three monthly themes with your community.

Visit their website [here](#) to learn more about the campaign and sign up your partnership!

News/Reminders: [I Can] Update

By participating in the [I Can] campaign, you are stating what you can do to support early childhood education. Please continue to inform members of your communities to support the [I Can] campaign on Facebook ([icansc](#)) and Twitter ([#icansc](#)).

In addition, we are still looking for partnerships to submit their adult [I Can] statement and images from members of their counties (like the one on the right submitted by Charleston!).

To submit, please email Betty Gardiner at bgardiner@scfirststeps.org.

Ruth Taylor says...

[I CAN]

encourage literacy and language with parents and young children by offering books as gifts.

What can YOU do? www.iCan.sc

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FIRST
STEPS



Ruth Taylor - Assistant Associate Superintendent
Charleston County School District