

Family Literacy Program in Newberry County Gives Children a “Bright Beginning”

In 2016 the Bright Beginnings Child Development Center celebrated ten years of being the early childhood component of Newberry County School District’s Family Literacy program. Parents who participate in the program have the opportunity to attend classes at the District’s Adult Education Center where they can work toward their GED and/or receive English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, computer skills classes, or vocational training. While parents attend classes, their children receive educational instruction from a certified teacher and a professional instructional assistant at Bright Beginnings at no cost to the parents.

Newberry County First Steps (NCFS) has played an integral role in partnering with and supporting the District’s Family Literacy Program throughout the past decade. In addition to the child care and adult education components, Bright Beginnings also prioritizes training and support sessions for parents. As a result, children and families who participate in the District’s Family Literacy program are also enrolled in NCFS’ Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. PAT is an evidence-based model to deliver parent education primarily through equipping parents with literacy-based knowledge and resources to prepare their children for a stronger start in life and greater success in school. Program components for participating parents and children include personal visits to the family’s home at least twice monthly and monthly meetings at Bright Beginnings with other PAT families.



A family who participated in Newberry County School District’s Family Literacy Program attends its ten year celebration.



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In addition, Bright Beginnings also received NCFS Library-Based program designed to provide literacy activities for children enrolled in preschool programs. This program aims to place in the homes of these children quality literature to encourage reading and together time for families. As part of this program, each class at the Center receives visits twice a month by the Outreach Librarian and children receive eight books to take home to add to his or her personal library. In addition to engaging in Read Alouds and comprehension activities, children are taught the proper care and handling of books. Through the reading sessions every two weeks, teachers are also trained in storytelling techniques to use in their own reading times. Books are also provided to the classroom to build up their libraries and give children more access to reading materials.

To mark ten successful years, earlier this month, former Bright Beginnings students and their families participated in a celebration at Ulysses S. Gallman Park in Newberry, which was attended by 30 adults and 61 children. Staff from the child care center, local community stakeholders, and NCFS staff also attended and helped to organize the event. The children and their families participated in interactive age-appropriate games, played on inflatables, and received books for summer reading as well as prizes for their participation in the games. Local college and high school students served as volunteers to facilitate the activities.

The Bright Beginnings Child Development Center represents a strong collaboration between the Center, the School District, and NCFS in ensuring that Newberry County’s parents and children are learning and growing together. When parents increase their literacy skills through this program, it better enables them to support their children’s literacy development and become active, lifelong participants in their education.

For more information on NCFS’ partnership with Newberry County School District and Bright Beginnings Child Development Center, please contact NCFS Executive Director Pat Caldwell at 803-321-1073.