

SMART BEGINNINGS

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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.



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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."



