



# Provider News Alert

MARCH 2009

Issue 4

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## ELC Mission & Vision

### Mission

To promote high-quality school readiness, voluntary pre-kindergarten and after

## President's Message



Children's Week is a special opportunity to fully recognize our commitment to promoting and enhancing the education, health, and wellbeing of our children. On Friday afternoon, March 20, we gathered together at Miami Children's Museum to renew and strengthen that promise. Similar Children's Week advocacy events are also scheduled to take place throughout Florida as well as in our state's capital. We appreciate everyone's efforts to participate in this important week and the wonderful artwork and performances by our young children.

The Early Learning Coalition is committed to preparing every child in our community for school. One way in which we accomplish this is through the assessment of children enrolled in our school readiness (SR) program. In Miami-Dade County, the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) was selected by our Assessment Task Force to screen children. When teachers engage in the assessment program they enhance their knowledge of children's developmental milestones, increase the early identification of children at risk for developmental delays, and provide early intervention strategies for children who may need additional support. The Learning Accomplishment Profile-Diagnostic (LAP-D) and Early Learning Accomplishment Profile (E-LAP) are also provided to a random cross-selection of children throughout the county, measuring their progress over time. This portion of the assessment process is administered by the staff from Miami-Dade County, Department of Human Services, Child Development Services (CDS).

At our Monday, April 6th board meeting, staff from CDS and Florida International University (FIU) will provide a full presentation of the process, results and indicators. I encourage your attendance for questions and answers as we continue our efforts to enhance the programs and services that strengthen the skills and education of our children. The meeting will be held at 2555 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Suite 500, Coral Gables, and starts at 8:00 a.m.

I am also very pleased to announce the release of an important case study: The Billion-Dollar Bet On A Community's Future. This study is about how The Children's Trust persuaded the 2.4 million residents of Florida's largest county to tax themselves during an economic downturn. The study was commissioned by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, an important partner who has made a significant investment in Florida through The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation (ECIF). Other ECIF partners include the University of Florida's Lastinger Center for Learning, Miami-Dade Public Schools, The Children's Trust, the Early Learning Coalition and United Way's Center for Excellence in Early Education. With the full support of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, these partners have worked collaboratively to improve the wellbeing and learning of children through Quality Counts, the SPARK Initiative (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids), Ready Schools Florida and the Early Childhood Learning Labs Initiative.

In fact, from March 24th - 26th, Kellogg held their Learning Labs conference in Miami. The conference is designed to connect the work in Hawaii, Washington, Mississippi and Florida as part of a movement to improve the health, education, and

school programs, thus increasing all children's chances of achieving future educational success and becoming productive members of society. The Coalition seeks to further the physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of Miami-Dade and Monroe County children with a priority toward the ages before birth through age 5.

## Vision

To ensure a comprehensive and integrated system providing for all families and their children, beginning before birth to 5 years, the affordable opportunity to enter school ready to learn and succeed in life.

## **Upcoming Board & Committee Meetings**

Board of Directors  
April 6 at 8:00 a.m.  
ELC Board Room

## **Miami-Dade County Save the Date**

**2008 VPK Standards  
Training**

April 2, 2009; 5:00-8:00  
p.m.

St. John the Apostle  
(Cafeteria)  
479 E 4th Street, Hialeah  
33010

wellbeing of children. Among the many important moments, there was one that particularly stood out. That moment came when Dave Lawrence spoke about our mission in Miami to build a movement that shows others what can be done and how it may be done. For the full text of Dave Lawrence's speech, please visit our website at [http://www.elcmdm.org/newsroom/news\\_coverage/DLwKFKeynote.pdf](http://www.elcmdm.org/newsroom/news_coverage/DLwKFKeynote.pdf). I hope that you will find his speech as inspiring as I did.

As always, I remain at your service.

Sincerely,

Evelio C. Torres  
President & CEO  
Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe

## **Important Announcements**

### **Child Advocate David Lawrence, Jr. to Speak at the 9th Triennial International Child & Youth Care Conference (ICYCC)**

Child advocates from around the world will convene in South Florida on Tuesday, May 26 through Friday, May 29, 2009, at the 9th Triennial International Child & Youth Care Conference (ICYCC) in the Greater Fort Lauderdale Broward County Convention Center. David Lawrence, Jr. will be the keynote speaker and this year's conference will focus on children, youth, and families in the child welfare system.

Close to 1,500 child and youth educators, healthcare providers, child and youth-care workers, social workers, researchers, teaching professionals, and child welfare trainers are expected to attend, and share their knowledge and expertise with fellow participants. The ICYCC strives to bring agencies, professionals and clients together in support of global advocacy, programming, and quality services that will improve the lives of at-risk children, youth, and families.

We are pleased to announce that the Coalition will select five (5) providers from a drawing to attend the conference free of charge. To submit your entry into the drawing, please send your name, the name of your center, address, and phone number to Alina Soto at [asoto@elcmdm.org](mailto:asoto@elcmdm.org). Entries must be received by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Monday, May 4, 2009. The drawing will be held that same day at 3:00 p.m. in the ELC Board Room. You are not required to attend the drawing in order to be selected. The five chosen will be notified accordingly.

### **ICYCC 2009 INFORMATION**

DATE: Tuesday, May 26 through Friday, May 29, 2009

LOCATION: Greater Fort Lauderdale Broward County  
Convention Center

ADDRESS: 1950 Eisenhower Blvd., Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33316  
[www.ftlauderdalecc.com](http://www.ftlauderdalecc.com)

\*This class is for VPK teachers and directors who have never taken VPK Standards Training.

All classes are instructed in English. Class starts promptly at 5:00 p.m. Those arriving after 5:15 p.m. will not be allowed in the training.

Please park between the church and school. Enter the building through the door north of the office door.

We are working on a schedule for more trainings in April and May and will release those dates and locations within the next few weeks.

To register please contact Lizzette Quesada at (305) 646-7220, ext 229.

PARENT/ADVOCATE ADMISSION RATE: \$150

**Tracks include:**

Adoption, foster care, residential treatment, group care, independent living, in-home-care, community-based care, juvenile justice, early childhood education, special education, homeless children and youth, epilepsy and seizure disorders.

**Topics at a glance:**

Substance abuse  
Cultural competence/diversity  
Internet abuse - child pornography  
Research and training initiatives  
Advocacy and public policy  
Dealing with aggression issues  
Child and youth development  
Professional standards  
Ethical practice issues  
Teen pregnancy  
Abuse and neglect  
Attachment issues  
Family-centered practice  
Obesity  
Homelessness

For more information on ICYCC 2009, please visit [www.icycc2009.com](http://www.icycc2009.com).

### Celebrating Children's Week with Hand Artwork

A big thank you to the providers who submitted their children's hand artwork to celebrate Children's Week. Our community's children will be well represented in Tallahassee!



Children from the following schools and centers in Miami-Dade County, showed off their creative and artistic talents:

- It's a Small World Learning Center III
- Forest Lakes Learning Center
- Child Care Center Riviera Presbyterian Church
- Lincoln Marti
- Tutor Me Daycare Academy
- Little Village Learning Center
- West Hialeah Baptist Church
- The Caring Place
- Head Start/Early Head Start
- Kiddie Kampus
- Carver Ranches Childcare Center
- Little Promises Daycare and Learning Center
- Pooh's Corner Learning Center
- Just Kids #2
- Gratigny Day Care
- Parkway Baptist Church Wee Care

- The Faith Lutheran Church of Hialeah
- Baptist Hospital Early Learning Center
- Camp Carnival Child Center
- Happy Kids Childcare
- Villa Learning Center
- Little College C. at Royal Oaks Plaza
- Holy Comforter Day Care Center
- Paradise Christian School
- YWCA
- Carol Center Pre-school II

### A Positive Development in the Department of Health's Inspection-Fee Policy

At our most recent Provider Services Committee (PSC) meeting, providers informed us that effective in 2009, a change had been implemented to Miami-Dade County Department of Health's (DOH) inspection fees. Realizing the potential undue burden placed on many providers, Evelio Torres wrote a letter to the head of the Department of Health. Additionally, Commissioner Natacha Seijas, PSC Chair, asked the DOH to place a moratorium on the fees and held a meeting with the department in her office. She requested that DOH leadership review and reconsider fee amounts as well as billing frequency.

It was agreed that the Facility Inspection/Health and Safety fee will be reduced based on the number of children being served. The DOH will be issuing their amended policy shortly.

### Some Helpful Information to Assist You in Filing Your Tax Return

- The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) helps people who work but do not earn a lot. Working families with incomes below \$41,646 and childless workers with incomes under \$15,880 often qualify. Generally, you must have earned income as an employee, independent contractor, or business owner to qualify.
- The recovery rebate credit is a one-time benefit for people who didn't receive the full economic stimulus payment last year and whose circumstances may have changed, making them eligible now for some or all of the unpaid portion. Generally, a credit adds to the amount of your tax refund or lowers the amount of taxes owed.
- A taxpayer who has a dependent child under age 17 probably qualifies for the child tax credit. This credit, which can be as much as \$1,000 per eligible child, is in addition to the regular \$3,500 exemption claimed for each dependent. A change in the way the credit is figured means that more low- and moderate-income families will qualify for the full credit on their 2008 returns. The child tax credit is not the same as the child care credit.
- An individual who pays for someone to care for a child so he or she can work or look for work probably qualifies for the

child and dependent care credit. Normally, the child must be the taxpayer's dependent and under age 13. Though often referred to as the child care credit, this credit is also available to those who pay someone to care for a spouse or dependent, regardless of age, who is unable to care for him or herself. In most cases, the care provider's social security number or taxpayer identification number must be obtained and entered on the return.

· Those who bought a main home recently or are considering buying one may qualify for the first-time homebuyer credit. Normally, a taxpayer qualifies if she didn't own a main home during the prior three years. This unique credit of up to \$7,500 works much like a 15-year interest-free loan. It is available for a limited time only, on homes bought from April 9, 2008, to June 30, 2009. It can be claimed on new Form 5405 and is repaid each year as an additional tax.

For additional details and tips on filing your 2008 tax return visit [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

\*Information was provided by the Internal Revenue Service.

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## ELC Board of Directors

As seen in previous news alerts, we have featured our board members to familiarize our community with the dedicated professionals who serve on the Coalition's board of directors. In this issue, it is our pleasure to highlight Board Director **Gerald K. Schwartz, Esq.**



Gerald K. Schwartz, Esq., an attorney, is the sole practitioner of his firm, Gerald K. Schwartz P.A. in Miami Beach. Prior to practicing law as a sole practitioner, Mr. Schwartz was previously a partner at such notable firms as Beloff & Schwartz; Ruden, Barnett, McClosky, Smith, Schuster & Russell, P.A.; Smith & Mandler, P.A.; and Trager & Schwartz.

Mr. Schwartz attended Emory University after graduation from Miami Beach Senior High School. Both his bachelor of business administration (BBA) and LLB/JD degrees were received from the University of Miami.

Born and raised in Miami Beach, Mr. Schwartz has participated in countless efforts to cultivate and promote the beloved city he still calls home. He has served as chairman of the board of the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce, the Miami Beach Housing Authority, the Miami Beach Optimist Club, and the Miami Beach Jewish Community Center and has volunteered with numerous other organizations serving Miami-Dade County constituents.

Actively involved in his community, Mr. Schwartz was recently appointed to both the South Florida East Coast Corridor Coalition and The Jay Malina International Trade Consortium by Commissioner Sally Heyman. As one who strongly believes that high quality education, services, and programs are keys to enhancing children's lives, Mr. Schwartz served on numerous school board committees and the board of directors for The Children's Trust from 2003 until his term expired in 2009. Presently he serves as a board director and board officer for the Early Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe.

Additionally for most of the twenty years that the New World School of the Arts has existed, Mr. Schwartz has been an active supporter, serving on the foundation board,

the executive board and as chairman.

Mr. Schwartz's steadfast community service on behalf of a wide variety of causes has received distinguished recognition. Not surprisingly he has been honored with several awards including: the Florida Congressional District Community Service Award, Certificate of Merit from Metropolitan Dade County, Dade County School Board Proclamation, and City of Miami Beach Proclamation.

Mr. Schwartz and his wife, Debra, Legislative Assistant to State Senator Dan Gelber, have three children and three grandchildren.

## Team Member Spotlight

This month, the spotlight shines on another valued team member and the important work she accomplishes in bringing quality early childhood education to our community. In this issue, it is our pleasure to highlight **Jackye Russell**, Director of School Readiness.

Jackye Russell has spent all her adult life working on behalf of children and adolescents, and her work as the director of school readiness at the Early Learning Coalition is no exception. It was only a little over a year ago that she became the Coalition's primary overseer of the School Readiness grant administered by the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI). She also manages grants for Miami-Dade County Public Schools' Teenage Parent Program and the Department of Children & Families' (DCF) Refugee Program.



When Jackye first arrived at the Coalition she wasted no time jumping in with both feet; she immediately took charge of amending The Plan to reflect actual operations and submitting it to AWI. She then set about certifying over 1,200 school readiness providers. This was an impressive feat considering the mountains of paperwork that piled her desk, much of which she addressed herself. Both she and Director of Inclusion and Assessment Bethany Sands share administrative assistance from Ana Maria Pineda.

Jackye relocated to Florida from Oklahoma in 2003 to assume a position working for DCF. A few years into her tenure as deputy district administrator she was introduced to the Coalition as a new member of the board of directors, serving as the DCF representative. Previously as an Oklahoma resident, she worked as a mental health therapist counseling victims of sexual abuse and juveniles for the Department of Juvenile Justice.

While one may wonder if her move to Miami was a bit of an abrupt change, Jackye admits the transition was a welcome one. Her home is a short walk from the beach and she appreciates the diversity and countless activities in and around the Miami area. Jackye is also a fan of travel, finally being able to take advantage of various cruises departing from the Port of Miami. As an avid reader, she participates in a book club that meets once a month for dinner and discussion of the club's most recent selection. Presently Jackye is immersed in the historical novel, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, a genre of book she particularly enjoys.

There is much that Jackye appreciates when it comes to the Coalition's programs, services, and efforts; one aspect which she particularly admires is how the Coalition introduces literacy to children, even little ones as young as infants and toddlers. "Reading is so important; I also have a real appreciation for it from a historical aspect as many of my ancestors died, and were willing to die to learn how to read. Education opens people to endless opportunities. I read a saying once that I think is so true, 'Only the educated are free.' I completely agree."

## Our Partners

Much of our success is attributed to the contributions of our valued partners. After all, they play a key role in helping us bring high quality early care and education programs and services to our children. In this issue, it is our pleasure to highlight The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation (ECIF).



The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation (ECIF) was founded in early 1999, born of the idea and inspiration of Miami couple, Dr. Jane and Jerry Katcher, who believed that the early childhood years are especially critical to the future of children and the community. The foundation works toward an early childhood education and development initiative in Miami-Dade County. The initiative's goal is to make high quality health, education and nurturing available and affordable to all Miami-Dade

County children between birth and age 5. In doing so, the initiative works toward the social, physical, emotional and intellectual growth of all children so that they are ready and eager to learn.

David Lawrence Jr., President of The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation, is a passionate advocate of early childhood education. His tireless community service, particularly on behalf of children, has gained notable recognition both locally and nationally. Playing an equally prominent role in the foundation is Ana Sejeck, Chief Operating Officer, and right-hand to Mr. Lawrence. Due to her diligence and enthusiasm, a number of collaborative efforts have come to fruition and enhanced the early care and education within our community.

One collaboration in particular is the foundation's generous funding of the database system for Quality Counts. This web-based early learning system (WELS) sets the Quality Counts program apart because of its superiority in enabling all project participants, from funders to stakeholders and partners, the opportunity to input and extract data related to the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS). Through WELS the Coalition is able to track assessment reports, quality improvement plans, and place orders for classroom materials that are linked directly to environmental rating scores.

Additionally, ECIF has graciously underwritten special projects for Quality Counts such as consulting services, trainings, and meetings with partners. As the project manager for the Kellogg-funded Ready Schools Miami, a national initiative, the foundation facilitated and supported the enrollment of Miami-Dade Public Schools' prekindergarten classrooms into Quality Counts. This partnership is unprecedented in the national QRIS landscape.

Perhaps one of the most successful Coalition-ECIF collaborations is the Recognition & Response initiative, which is currently in the final phase of a two-year research project that studies learning difficulties in three- and four-year-old preschoolers. A true partnership--the Coalition; ECIF; Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation; and guiding research partner, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute in Chapel Hill, North Carolina; have joined forces to provide ongoing consultative support in 16 classrooms located throughout Miami-Dade County. Due to the foundation's proactive work, this project has not only received national recognition but provides significant data for early identification of learning difficulties and highly successful intervention strategies in three- and four-year-old children.

Lastly, the *Teach More/Love More* publication has provided a forum for informative, family-oriented articles, many of which are written by ELC staff. Thanks to the excellent oversight and support of The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation,

particularly Editor Ana de Aguiar Echevarria, the quality of newsworthy articles is outstanding.

For more information on The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation and to read archived issues of *Teach More/Love More*, visit [www.teachmorelovemore.org](http://www.teachmorelovemore.org).

\*Information about The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation is provided by their website at [www.teachmorelovemore.org](http://www.teachmorelovemore.org).

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## Miami-Dade County News Briefs

### *School Readiness*

#### Early Care and Education Providers' Business Meeting

Miami-Dade County's Child Development Services (CDS) Bureau at the Department of Human Services is hosting a meeting for early care and education providers on **Tuesday, March 31** at the **South Dade Regional Library** and **Wednesday, April 1, 2009** at the **Martin Luther King Building, 2nd Floor**, at **10:00 a.m.** and in Spanish at **2:00 p.m.**

The meeting agenda is as follows:

I. Welcome Remarks and Introduction

II. Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Child Nutrition Program

Liliana Romero, Government Operations Consultant  
Anne Marie Alderman, Environmental Manager  
Arnoldo Aguilera, Sanitation and Safety Supervisor  
Miami-Dade County Health Department

III. Child Development Services Bureau Updates: Edith Humes-Newbold, Bureau Chief

- o VPK Tier Registration
- o Electronic Attendance

IV. Training: Inclusion and Assessment Training

Nanette Bartels, Inclusion Specialist  
Dunia Villanueva, Inclusion Specialist  
Child Development Services Bureau  
Inclusion and Assessment Division

- o Warmline

V. Providers Questions, Issues and Concerns

VI. Adjournment

Training and implementation of the electronic attendance submission will be discussed.

## *Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Updates*

### VPK Registration for the 2009-2010 School Year Has Begun

VPK registration for the 2009-2010 school year is now in full swing. This year, in an effort to reduce the amount of wait-time for parents, registration is taking place in three tiers. Please assist us in communicating this schedule to your parents. By following this schedule, the process will be more efficient.

#### Tier 1

- Children enrolled in the School Readiness/subsidized childcare program turning 4-years-old by September 1, 2009
- Privates - children not enrolled in subsidized childcare, but who attend a facility that has VPK and/or School Readiness

#### Tier 2

- Children selected through the School Board Lottery

#### Tier 3

- General Public

<b>Tier</b>	<b>Mondays - Fridays</b> <b>8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Saturdays</b> <b>9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.</b>
<b>1 School Readiness</b> <b>1 Privates</b>	<b>March 2-March 20</b>  <b>March 23-April 3</b>	<b>February 28</b> <b>March 7 and 14</b>  <b>March 21 and 28</b> <b>April 4</b>
<b>2 MDCPS</b>	<b>April 17-May 8</b>	<b>April 18 and 25</b> <b>May 2</b>
<b>3 Public Kick Off</b> <b>(General Public)</b>	<b>May 18-ongoing</b>	<b>May 16</b> <b>June 6, 13, 20, 27</b> <b>August 1, 8, 15</b>

#### Sites:

Miami Gardens Neighborhood Service Center  
16405 NW 25th Avenue  
Miami Gardens, Florida 33054

Frankie Shannon Rolle Neighborhood Service Center  
3750 South Dixie Highway  
Miami, Florida 33133

Naranja Neighborhood Service Center  
13955 SW 264th Street  
Miami, Florida 33032

## VPK/Department of Education (DOE) Training Management System

Effective March 25, 2009, all VPK teachers, teacher assistants and directors enrolling in "face-to-face" VPK trainings and DOE-approved online trainings will go online to register at <http://www.myflorida.com/childcare/> (select Training Requirements).

The VPK face-to-face training courses are free of charge and include:

- 2008 VPK Education Standards
- What's New in VPK
- It's Okay to Play in VPK Train-the-Trainer
- Integrating the VPK Standards: Phonological Awareness
- Integrating the VPK Standards: Phonological Awareness Practicum
- Emergent Literacy in the VPK Classroom

DOE-approved online training includes:

- Emergent Literacy for VPK Instructors
- English Language Learners in the VPK Classroom
- VPK Director Credential

For additional details on DOE-approved instructor-led training in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, please contact South Florida VPK Facilitator Kerry Allen at (305) 646-7220, ext. 239 or via email at [kallen@elcmdm.org](mailto:kallen@elcmdm.org).

\*Information is taken from the Florida Department of Education (DOE) Office of Early Learning flyer regarding the Training Management System, March 2009.

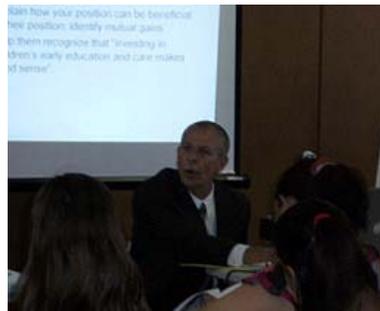
## Monroe County News Briefs

### Children's Recycled Art Project for Earth Day

Join Wesley House to participate in a Children's Week recycled art project. This fun activity will involve parents and children working together to learn about the importance of recycling. All participants will have the opportunity to place their art projects on display at the Wesley House Annual Conference, scheduled for May 2, 2009, at Marathon High School. A 'green' ribbon will be awarded to each artist.

All forms of art are acceptable and recycled materials must be used to create all projects. Parent involvement is important! Staff from Wesley House can supply classroom information about the importance of recycling as well as information to send home to parents. The project due-date is **Earth Day: April 22, 2009**. Wesley House will make arrangements to pick up the recycled art projects for the annual conference's display. For additional information, please contact 809-5000.

### Provider Advocacy Workshop



Coalition Board Director Alan Eckstein (left) presented a provider advocacy training on February 28, 2009, in Marathon.

## Legislative Workshop

Sue Ellen Spencer (right), aide to Rep. Ron Saunders, familiarized providers with the [www.myfloridahouse.gov](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov) and [www.myfloridasenate.gov](http://www.myfloridasenate.gov) websites to track the progress of pending bills. Additionally, she provided an overview of the legislative process and gave helpful hints on how to communicate with legislators.



## *Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Updates*

### Summer 2009 VPK Registration Begins March 30<sup>th</sup>

The Monroe County School District will offer the 300-hour Summer VPK Program from June 10 - July 22, 2009, Monday - Friday from 7:45 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. The program will be available at the following sites: Poinciana School in Key West; Stanley Switlik or Marathon High School (to be determined); and Key Largo School. Parents must provide transportation.

Children who have not previously participated in the VPK program and will be entering kindergarten in the upcoming 2009-2010 school year are eligible to participate in the Summer VPK Program.

Registration for the Summer VPK Program begins the week of Monday, March 30, 2009, at all Wesley House locations as follows: Monday - Friday from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. at the Key West and Tavernier offices; and Tuesday and Thursday from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. at the Marathon office.

For additional information, please contact 809-5000 or 296-5557.

### VPK Registration Round-Ups for the 2009-2010 School Year Program

Spring VPK Registration Round-Ups for the 2009-2010 VPK School Year Program are just around the corner. The registration round-up dates are as follows:

- Key West - Saturday, April 4, 2009; 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Wesley House, 1304 Truman Avenue
- Key Largo - Saturday, April 18, 2009; 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Key Largo Library, Tradewinds Shopping Center
- Marathon - Saturday, April 18, 2009; 3:00 - 5:00 p.m., Marathon Library, 3251 Overseas Highway

\*Note: Ongoing registration for the 2009-2010 VPK School Year Program will be conducted at all Wesley House locations beginning Monday, May 4, 2009.

Additional details are forthcoming with flyers to be distributed to providers and throughout the community.

### Encouraging Self-Confidence in Young Children

Self confidence and self-esteem are terms that reflect how we feel about ourselves. One of our primary tasks is to build a foundation of self confidence in young children. This will directly influence how they perceive themselves and later, how others will react to them as adults.

It all starts with building relationships. Self confidence is greatly influenced by the quality of the relationships children have with others. Peer relationships are important, but those with parents and caregivers directly impact lifelong feelings of confidence and success.

Children look to their significant adults' responses and reactions, and based on those, decide how they should act or feel. When a toddlers fall down, they immediately look at the facial expression of the adult to determine if they should cry or hold off tears. Facial cues become emotional cues for children in terms of how they learn to think and feel about themselves. Think of yourself as a mirror. Children learn about themselves through their reflection in you.

#### How to Support Confidence-Building in Young Children:

- **Be in tune** with children's thoughts by learning and reading the looks on their faces. Help them understand how they feel.
- **Provide genuine responses.** Listen and think before you respond so that children will feel understood.
- **Value each child's feelings.** Saying, "You act like a baby," only makes a child feel bad and lessens his or her self confidence.
- **Intentionally help** children learn confidence by providing opportunities for children to feel good about themselves. When a child smiles and says, "Look! Look! I did it!" acknowledge him or her with real pleasure. A proudly lit up face is one that shows self confidence.
- **Provide specific responses** by acknowledging a child's feeling. "I see you are upset. That's okay. Let's talk about why you are upset," instead of "Go to timeout until you feel better".

Parents and teachers need to understand every child by accepting their individuality, valuing their uniqueness, and appreciating each one as a person. Show genuine pleasure and joy for the potential in each child. Children need to feel understood, accepted and special; they find value in themselves through your eyes.