



RCMA HOY

We Can Make
A World of
Difference

Helping Our Youth



SEPTEMBER 1996 Issue 42 OUR MISSION: Helping Parents Restart, Giving Kids a Head Start, Helping Staff Develop

Listening—the key to communication; but what does it mean to listen?

By GERRY LAMBERT
Staff Development Specialist

A concerned RCMA HOY reader recently shared the following on “The Art of Listening” which echoes a common human experience. I think it’s right on target about what it means to listen and the challenges we face in listening every day.

The Art of Listening

When I ask you to listen and you start giving advice, you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me I shouldn’t feel that way, you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to do something to solve my problem, you have failed me, strange as it may seem.

Listen! All I asked was that you listen, not talk or do—just hear me.

And I can do for myself. I am not helpless. Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.

When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself, you contribute to my fear and inadequacy.

But, when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel, then I can quit trying to convince you and get

The greatest gift that we can give others is being fully present to the person we are with at any

about the business of understanding what’s behind this feeling, even if it is irrational.

And when that’s clear, the answers are obvious and I don’t need advice.

Thanks for listening.

It’s often said that our greatest need in the area of leadership development in RCMA is in communication.

Most problems in our centers, programs and offices, or better said, challenges among two or more persons, is due to a breakdown or lack of communication.

What does it mean to communicate effectively? When I ask this question in trainings, most people respond “having ourselves understood or getting our

PLEASE SEE
LISTENING, PAGE 3

Snapshots of a cross-country journey on bicycle

By GERRY LAMBERT
Staff Development Specialist

Crossing a fog-swept beach on the mountainous Oregon coast with my bicycle hoisted on my shoulders I reached the Pacific Ocean on July 21, fulfilling a promise I made to myself and my wife, Stella, several months ago.

This came after 56 consecutive days of cycling a total of 4,200 miles on a cross-country journey beginning at the Atlantic Ocean on the Virginia coast.



Photo By STELLA LAMBERT

Gerry Lambert reaches the Pacific Ocean.

Stella, who accompanied me in a motor home, and I became acquainted in slow motion with the beauty of the diverse landscape encountered across the United States. We

PLEASE SEE CROSS-COUNTRY JOURNEY, PAGE 4

APPLAUSE

Immokalee Area

Congratulations to Norma Ramirez, education coordinator at Farmworker Village A and Immokalee Child Development Center Annex, on the birth of her son, Jonathan. Jonathan, who was born August 25, is very excited about life.

State Office

Judy Brill, office manager, took a positive step in her career development by registering for a computer class through Edison Community College.

The story doesn't stop here. Judy allowed her enthusiasm to spread by arranging for an ECC representative to conduct an on-site information, orientation and registration session for interested staff.

The possibility of setting up a Spanish Language class was looked at. If ten students register, ECC will send an instructor to RCMA to teach the class.

Judy's effort is a fine example of initiating and creating possibilities for people.

Highlands/Hardee Area

Noemi Aponte, Sebring Center outreach worker, was elected vice president of the board of directors of the Highlands Self-Help Housing Agency, a non-profit community based agency which encourages home

ownership for low-income people who are willing to be a part of building their own home.

The agency is in its first year.

Noemi encouraged two other staff, Geneva Hayes, area secretary, and Antonia Santiago, education coordinator, to participate.

They are now active board members and contribute their direct experience in becoming a homeowner through the Habitat and SHIP program.

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Many staff in this area have completed the first course in the early childhood education two-year degree program.

They include: Bernadine Clarke, Marjorie Thomas and Sandy Cook of Avon Park; Edilia Cruz of Sebring; Alberta Roebuck, Dorothy McGahee and Chris Burney of Lake Placid; Andrea Stringfield, Stacey Wilson and Samantha Smith of South Highlands; Ramona Matthews, Hilaria Cuevas, Lucia Garcia, Gracie Valadez and Sulema Lobato of Fred Dennis; and Rosalind Lewis of Bowling Green.

Congratulations to these staff on completing this course. We wish them the best of luck in fulfilling their educational goals of obtaining an undergraduate degree in early childhood education or social services.



Photo by GERRY LAMBERT

Armandina Reyes, a teacher at Smith Brown Child Development Center in Arcadia showing her caring nature. She's committed to our mission of giving kids a head start.

Safety News

Be prepared for a hurricane

Are you and your family ready in the event of a hurricane?

We don't want to experience a hurricane as our friends did in Homestead with Andrew in 1992 or as the people in North Carolina did this month with Fran.

But you and your family should take some precautions and have a plan because we never know when a hurricane will hit. Before the storm:

- Stay away from beaches and other areas that may have high waves, rip tides or storm surges.
- Stay at home unless you are ordered to evacuate. If you live in a mobile trailer or are subject to high water from the surge, you should go to an emergency shelter.
- Bring everything inside that can blow away - plants, garbage cans, tools, furniture.
- Remove tree limbs that can damage the house or power line. Remove coconuts from palm trees.
- Make sure vehicles are on high ground away from trees, preferably in a garage. Fill your gas tank.
- Close all windows. Close and brace all interior doors. Cover all doors, garage doors and windows with plywood or shutters.
- Fill clean containers with drinking water. Set large pails of water in the bathroom for emergency flushing, if necessary. Fill the bathtub with water.
- Stock up on food that doesn't need refrigeration or cooking.
- Turn off propane tanks and unplug appliances.
- Have fire extinguishers handy in case of fire and use buckets of sand for oil fires.
- Keep the radio on. Have plenty of fresh batteries on hand. Battery operated cellular phones, scanners and CB radios may be handy.
- Keep a camera handy for recording damage after the storm.

Be prepared and be protected.

Words of support

Our prayers are with Irma Ponce, an RCMA parent since 1991 and Parent President at the Dade City Migrant Head Start Center the past three years.

Irma was recently seriously injured in a car accident while working out of state.

Irma was featured in a story in the July 1996 issue of *Parent News* as a powerful role model for parent involvement.

We wish Irma a speedy recovery.

Cross-country journey

Continued from page 1

did this on roads mostly less traveled.

These country roads, state roads and U.S. Highways took us through national forests, over mountains at altitudes up to 11,500 ft. often in view of snow-capped peaks, into Hells Canyon (on the Idaho-Oregon border) with a depth of 6,600 feet, over the Continental Divide about 10 times, through stretches of hundreds of miles of farmland, over and alongside rivers including the Mississippi, Ohio, Snake, and Salmon rivers, through Yellowstone National Park, past the homes of James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Harry Truman, through college towns, coal or logging communities, through colonial towns and gold rush regions, on the Lewis and Clark Trail, by posh ski resorts, and along the mountainous Oregon Pacific Ocean coast. I rode in temperatures ranging from 30 degrees to over 100 degrees, starting as early as 6 a.m. and riding as late as 9 p.m.

Roadkill of all kinds was part of the landscape along the route. So when I began to notice turtles of all sizes surveying the roadways with only their hardhat and no orange flags or other warning signs for motorists to heed, I could easily imagine their inevitable fate.

I've committed myself to being life-giving to all living creatures when possible. With this in mind, I decided that whenever I saw a turtle in the road, whether I was ascending a steep hill where stopping would make it even more difficult to climb, or flying fast and free at speeds approaching 50 mph down a hill, the momentum on which I greatly appreciated, I would apply my brakes, go back, interrupt their surveying activity and move the turtle off the road to safety. A small gesture, perhaps, but one which I consistently repeated 50 to 75 times throughout Kentucky, Missouri and

Kansas. I did this with more than a small sense of satisfaction.

Cycling for several hundred miles through the flatest, and certainly welcome, stretch of land on the entire transcontinental route in Kansas, I listened intently to the golden wheat whistling in the wind which offered a resonating serenity.

Huge family farms appear to be alive and well in this farmbelt region of the United States. In fact, I witnessed the harvesting of the winter wheat crop in mid-June by farmers driving air-conditioned combines—with daily temperatures hovering around 100 degrees — costing more than \$100,000.



The TransAmerica Trail from Virginia to Oregon.

Deer often greeted me with their gentle existence on the incredibly barren Wyoming roadside before they gracefully dashed off under the ever-present barbed wire fences to roam the vast prairie land.

In Yellowstone National Park I was introduced to a herd of buffalo that was not as attentive to passers-by as are deer. Probably for the better. In any event, I didn't take it personally because these rather unkempt, sluggish looking four-leggeds were involved in the more urgent task of grazing.

Their scruffy appearance reminded me that my beard probably, no, definitely, needed a trim.

One of the most meaningful experiences of our journey in terms of connecting with other human beings occurred in the Willamette Valley region of Oregon.

It was about 4:30 p.m. on a mid-July Friday afternoon. We were

about 6 miles or so from our designated ending point for the day. This ending point was nowhere in particular. We were surrounded by farms with not even a small town in the area. We planned to just find a safe place to park our RV for the night.

When I caught up to Stella in the parking lot of a Mennonite school, we looked around and thought maybe we could stay there. We even located a spigot as a source of water. We decided we would complete the last six miles and return there if we found nothing else.

As I continued cycling, I came upon a sign a hundred yards down the road that indicated a bakery. It looked like a private residence used also for this purpose. The illuminated sign said "open." So dressed in my cycle gear—cycling shirt and shorts minus the helmet—we went in to buy a loaf of bread. Or so we thought.

We were greeted by the baker, Loretta, a middle-aged, single Mennonite woman wearing a prayer covering on her head (a religious tradition for ladies), who is also a teacher, and her 75-year-old father. Their hospitality was as warm as the freshly baked bread and pastries laid out on a table.

We began to share with them what we were doing in "passing by" and they began to open up to us. We soon found out that the baker's sister had adopted a Colombian child, Stella's native country.

Other families in their church, we quickly learned, had also adopted several Colombian children and children from other Latin American countries, as well as from Belize and India.

This discovery was one of the first threads in the quilt of friendship that was woven with the Mennonites of this community over the next 18 hours. We found common ground on which to begin to weave many beautiful patterns that evening and the next morning.

This was made possible through their trusting invitation to stay with them at their house that night. We met many friendly families from the community who either came to visit us at their house or at the Mennonite school during a youth function that evening.

The 75-year-old father of eleven children gave us a tour of his house and farm which he grew up on as a boy. This provided some insight into Mennonite traditions.

They were a simple but beautiful people that gave us a vivid experience of place in this gorgeous region of Oregon. And they were a living example for us of the saying, "There is no such thing as strangers. Just friends who haven't met."

Reaching our desired destination at the Pacific Ocean was certainly a special moment for me. But the most meaningful and magical aspects of our odyssey were perhaps those unexpected and spontaneous moments of freedom to experience the blessings of life unfolding in our midst.

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PARENT NEWS

SEPTEMBER 1996 Issue 4 A Bi-Monthly Parent Involvement Supplement of RCMA HOY

Meeting family needs, center stays open till 8:30 PM

Gadsden - Florida Panhandle
During the harvest season (May through July) migrant families find it difficult to spend time together. The children are usually in school while the parents are working all day and often well into the night. Therefore, the opportunities for parents to visit their children's school and review the day's activities are extremely limited.

The short season is very labor intensive and it is possible to work long hours - except for the fact that RCMA requires children to be picked up by 5:30 PM, making it impossible

Parents signed a contract promising to participate at least two evenings a week.

for those with small children in day care to work the extra hours and earn the additional income such work would provide.

At the Gadsden RCMA Center this was remedied this past season with a Migrant Even Start Extended Day Family Program.

This pilot program was a first for this area. It served fifteen migrant families. Recruitment took place during Migrant Head Start Registration and was reinforced with the help of the Florida Migrant Interstate Program, the Florida Department of Education and RCMA.

Children attended 7 AM to 8:30 PM with parents arriving between

6 to 7 PM to eat a meal with their children and to participate in family oriented activities. This included information given to parents concerning their child's curriculum during the day and exercises that they can do at home to support school efforts. Various other topics were also covered.

Parents rated the following as the most useful topics covered or activities performed:

- Help with homework.
- Dealing with problem teenagers.
- Child abuse prevention.
- Lessons in first aid.
- Quality time spent with children.
- Parents role as first teachers



photo by Juana Gaytán
(l to r) Mrs. Maricela Vazquez, her son Franco, Mrs. Inez Orosco, Teacher, making paper hats from old newspapers

A total of 35 children and 30 adults attended this 6 week program. Since the building was already used Monday through Friday for the Migrant Head Start program, extending

into the evening proved to be an excellent use of the existing resources, building, and facilities.

Families were asked to sign a contract stating that they would participate at least two times a week. A minimal fee of \$1 was collected for dinner for the entire family each night to cover the cost of non-qualifying children (ages 8 and up). This fee was later used to purchase books and materials for the families to build their own personal libraries.

Mrs. Vazquez had two children, Franco (photo) and an infant son enrolled in the Migrant Head Start Program.

When Mrs. Vazquez was asked what she does differently now from before Migrant Even Start she spoke of the same things others had written in their evaluations: Knowing what to do in an emergency, such as when a child is choking; the importance of not hitting one's children, instead to give them lots of love and to spend time with them; and what to do in case of domestic violence.

Mrs. Vazquez also appreciated not to have to cook the evening meal which allowed her to enjoy this extra time with her children.

Questioned about whether her husband, who did not participate this year, would join her next year if the program were offered again, she smiled and reassured me that indeed he would.

Editor: Irene G. Brammertz

Please send parent involvement news from your center, ideas and suggestions to:

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NOTICIAS DE PADRES

SEPTIEMBRE 1996 Núm. 4 Suplemento Bimensual de RCMA HOY en Envolvimiento de Padres

Sirviendo a las familias, centro abre hasta las 8:30 PM

Gadsden - Florida Panhandle
Durante la temporada de la cosecha (mayo a julio) las familias migrantes encuentran muy difícil pasar tiempo juntos. Los niños están generalmente en la escuela mientras los padres trabajan todo el día y a veces hasta entrada la noche. Esto hace que las oportunidades para que los padres visiten la escuela de los niños y repasen las actividades del día sean extremadamente limitadas.

La corta temporada es de trabajo intensivo y es posible que se trabaje largas horas - excepto por el hecho de que RCMA requiere que los niños sean

Los padres firmaron un contrato prometiendo participar por lo menos dos noches a la semana.

levantados para las 5:30 PM. Esto hace imposible que los padres que tienen niños en los centros trabajen horas extras y ganen el dinero adicional que estas horas le pueden proveer.

En el centro de RCMA de Gadsden esto se solucionó en la pasada temporada con el Programa Familiar de Día Extendido de Migrant Even Start.

Este programa piloto fue el primero en esta área. Se sirvió a quince familias migrantes que se reclutaron durante la registración y fue reforzado por el Programa Florida Migrant Interstate del Departamento de Educación de Florida y RCMA.

Los niños asistieron al centro de 7 AM a 8:30 PM y los padres llegaban

entre 6 y 7 PM para cenar con los niños y participar en actividades orientadas a la familia. Esto incluía información para los padres relacionada con las clases de los niños durante el día y ejercicios que ellos podían hacer en la casa para apoyar los esfuerzos de la escuela. También se cubrieron otros temas.

Los padres encontraron los siguientes temas y actividades como los más útiles:

- Ayuda con la tarea.
- Trabajando con adolescentes con problemas
- Prevención de abuso de niños
- Lecciones de primeros auxilios
- Tiempo de calidad con los niños
- El papel de los padres como primeros maestros



*foto por Juana Gaytán
(izq.-der.) Sra. Maricela Vazquez, su hijo Franco, Sra. Inez Orosco, maestra, haciendo sombreros de periódicos viejos*

Un total de 35 niños y 30 adultos asistieron al programa de 6 semanas. Como el edificio se estaba ya usando

de lunes a viernes para el programa Migrante de Head Start, se extendió el uso hasta la noche lo que probó ser un excelente uso de recursos, edificios y facilidades.

A las familias se les pidió que firmaran un contrato diciendo que participarían por los menos dos veces a la semana. Se cobró \$1 para la cena para toda la familia cada noche para cubrir el costo de los niños que no calificaban (8 años en adelante). Este dinero se usó para comprar libros y materiales para las familias comenzar sus bi-bliotecas personales.

La Sra. Vazquez tiene dos niños, Franco (foto) y un bebé registrado en el Programa Migrante de Head Start. Cuando se le preguntó a la Sra. Vazquez qué hacía diferente después de participar en el programa, ella contestó lo que otros también escribieron en sus evaluaciones: Qué hacer en caso de una emergencia por ejemplo si un niño se está ahogando; la importancia de no pegarle a los niños, de darles mucho amor y dedicarles tiempo; y qué hacer en caso de violencia doméstica.

La Sra. Vazquez también apreció el no tener que cocinar cena lo cual le permitió disfrutar el tiempo adicional con los niños.

Cuando se le preguntó si su esposo, que no participó este año, participaría el próximo año si se ofrece el programa, ella sonrió y me aseguró que sí lo haría.

Editor: Irene G. Brammertz

Favor enviar noticias de involucramiento de padres en su centro, ideas y sugerencias a:

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