



RCMA HOY

Redlands Christian Migrant Association

We Can Make
A World of
Difference

Helping Our Youth



MAY 1998

Issue 61

OUR MISSION: Helping Parents Restart, Giving Kids a Head Start, Helping Staff Develop

Faith figures big for three generations

By **LESLIE MOGUIL**
Special Projects Coordinator

Willie Mae Crawford, a cook at Crescent City Child Development Center, had news to share with her family while an eleventh grader at age seventeen. She was pregnant.

It was not easy for Willie Mae, who had six siblings, and was born and raised in East Palatka by a preacher and a homemaker, to tell her parents.

"At first my father said I must marry. Later he changed his mind because he didn't think this young man was good enough for me."

She married, dropped out of school, and had her first child, Sidney. Todd, Bruce, Valerie, Eric and Corey completed her family.

Willie Mae took up a friend on her offer to come out to California after receiving a one-way ticket to Los Angeles in the mail.

She packed up two of her three children, with the youngest staying behind with her grandmother.

Willie Mae came home to Florida to try to work things out with her husband, but loyalty was not one of his strong suits.

She looks back at her 11 years in the Downs Housing Project in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles as some of her most desperate. "I got up one morning and I had no food for my kids, the rent was due, and all I had was \$47.

"I sat and wept in front of my children. I remember Sidney saying, 'Momma, it's going to be alright.' Sidney has always been the comforter, even now."

"A friend convinced me that I must put

"I got up one morning and I had no food for my kids, the rent was due, and all I had was \$47. I sat and wept in front of my children."

—Willie Mae Crawford

in California, Willie Mae came back home to Florida.

She had always been able to rely on her cooking skills from an early age, starting as a short order cook, cooking for farmworkers through a migrant labor contractor, and being a dinner cook at a Palatka coffee shop for six years.

In 1985 RCMA was looking to hire a cook for their child care center in Palatka. Willie Mae applied and with her credentials was a sure hire. She has been cooking for RCMA ever since.

"I love my job, my kids at the center and their families. I am the first one they see in the morning and I try to make everyone feel



PASSING ON A LIFELONG SKILL: Willie Mae Crawford (left) mentors Jessy Ledbetter, a new cook for Pomona Park Head Start.

Photo by LESLIE MOGUIL

my pride aside in order to feed my children. I remember sitting down crying in that welfare office. The people were so nice to me there. They helped me realize that I needed help. I left the office with a voucher for food."

After 11 years of struggling financially

welcome."

Willie Mae has a morning routine—she starts in the baby room with a song, kisses and hugs. Then it's off to the toddlers with

Please see **WILLIE MAE**, page 4

Wahneta staff handled fire professionally



On April 15 we at RCMA had our first fire in 32 years of service. All these years of fire drills, pushing children out the door in cribs, waking up sleeping kids and being annoyed at the person who pulled the alarm, and finally we had our BIG TEST!

What is so wonderful is that the Wahneta Migrant Head Start staff did everything right! They followed their procedures, protected the children and themselves and earned high praise from the fire marshal. Practice really does

Less than two weeks after losing our center for the rest of the season, the Wahneta staff were back on the job offering our families services again in a small church which opened their hearts and home to us.

pay off.

I am especially grateful to all the staff for being being so professional and carrying on after the fire so admirably. Less than two weeks after losing our center for the rest of the season, the Wahneta staff were back on the job offering our families services again in a small church which opened their hearts and home to us.

Just as occurred after Hurricane Andrew in Homestead in 1992, in spite of everything suffered, our staff came through fast for the families we serve. They cleaned, painted and set up classrooms without complaints.

RCMA is made up of the best staff in the business—and don't ever forget it. Thank you all for the love and services you give so freely. □

Barbara Mainster, Executive Director

Personal de Wahneta actuan profesionalmente durante incendio

DEL ESCRITORIO DE BARBARA

En menos de dos semanas de perder el centro, los empleados de Wahneta regresaron al trabajo ofreciendo a nuestras familias los servicios nuevamente—en una iglesia pequeña en la cual nos ofrecieron sus corazones y su hogar.

El pasado 15 de abril nosotros en RCMA tuvimos el primer incendio despues de 32 años de servicio.

Todos estos años de practicas de incendios—de empujar a niños afuera de las puertas en las cunas, de despertar a niños, y estar enojados con la persona que jaló la alarma—finalmente tuvimos nuestro gran examen.

Lo que es muy maravilloso es que los empleados de Wahneta Migrant Head Start hicieron todo bien! Ellos siguieron todos los procedimientos, protegieron a los niños y se protegieron ellos mismos y ganaron la admiracion del Jefe de Bomberos. La practica si paga.

Yo estoy especialmente agradecida a todos los empleados por actuar profesionalmente y continuar su trabajo

Sigue en pagina 3, INCENDIO



EVERGLADES I: The children in this Florida City center recently received Fire Safety Education from the Metro-Dade Fire Rescue. Maria Flores, a teacher, was presented with a participation certificate from public education specialist Francisco Saavedra.

All the children received a firefighter's hat.

Photo by MARTITA HUERTAS

All 89 safe in Wahneta

All 89 children and staff escaped uninjured during a morning fire at Wahneta Migrant Head Start on April 15.

Some children were sleeping and others were playing outside the center when a teacher taking a child to the restroom noticed the smoke at 9:45 a.m.

Staff moved quickly to evacuate the building, getting everyone out and calling 911 in less than 30 seconds. Polk County firefighters were on the scene within 5 minutes by 9:50. The fire was under control by 10:20 a.m.

The fire started inside a supply closet and was caused by a faulty air conditioner handler. The handler is the part that takes the air in and blows it back out.

The fire heavily damaged one classroom and spread to a second room.

"The staff's plan went very well. The evacuation plan was very effective."
—State Fire Marshal John Haight

Two other rooms had smoke damage.

There were 30 preschoolers, 17 toddlers and 12 infants at the center when the fire started as well as 30 staff.

"They weren't scared," said Christina Dragustinovas, describing the children's reaction. "They did very good. I told them they did a good job, that it was a fire and I told the teachers they did a good job."

While firefighters extinguished the fire, staff and children sat outside Guadalupe Catholic Church, located near the center, singing songs and playing games. Some went inside the church hall.

State Fire Marshal John Haight said that had it not been for the staff's fire drills, the

outcome could have been worse.

"Their plan went very well," Height said. "The evacuation plan was very effective." □

(Taken from The Ledger, April 16, 1998.)

Birth announcement congratulations . . .

Martha Montes, center coordinator at Everglades II in Florida City, gave birth to Roberto on April 19.

Angelica Granadero, teacher at Immokalee Child Development Center Infant, gave birth to Ricardo on February 27.

Child recites poem to honor teacher

A la presencia de esta escuelita con su bonita sombrita, estas palabras que digo se las dedico a mi Teacher Adelita.

De Esta escuelita bonita, me voy triste y alegre, con todo lo que yo aprendí; como Adelita me enseñaba, algo para ser para mi.

Y adios Teacher Adelita siempre, siempre me acordaré de ti, y tambien de mis amigos, con todo lo que yo compartí.

Recited by Jose Montalvo, 5-year-old, Plant City Migrant Head Start at graduation. Written by Jose's mother, Micaela Montalvo, Parent President. For Adelita Treviño, lead teacher.

Congratulations

Bertha Rivera, teacher trainee at Immokalee Child Development Center Infant (ICDC Infant), got married to Juan Ocanas on April 18.

Benita Abrigo, a teacher at ICDC Infant, is proud of her daughter, Bernice Abrigo, who graduated from St. Leo's College with an accounting degree on May 5.



THE GOVERNOR'S EAR: Blanca Rocha, support services assistant at La Estancia Migrant Head Start in Wimauma, met with Gov. Lawton Chiles and other state leaders and took part in a march March 30-31 in Tallahassee to push for legislation beneficial to children. Others from RCMA who participated were Josie Gracia, Ruskin Infant early childhood specialist, Board member Dorothy Cissel, and executive director Barbara Mainster.

Photo by JOSIE GRACIA

Incendio

(Sigue de pagina 2)

admirablemente despues del incendio.

En menos de dos semanas de perder el centro, los empleados de Wahneta regresaron al trabajo ofreciendo a nuestras familias los servicios nuevamente—en una iglesia pequeña en la cual nos ofrecieron sus corazones y su hogar.

Igualmente ocurrió con el Huracan Andrew en Homestead en 1992, despues de todo lo sufrido nuestros empleados actuaron rapido para ayudar a las familias que servimos.

Ellos limpiaron, pintaron y arreglaron salones sin quejas.

RCMA está conformado de los mejores empleados del negocio y nunca lo olviden.

Gracias a todos por el amor y los servicios que dan tan libremente. □

Barbara Mainster, Directora Ejecutiva

(Traducido por Norma Ramirez)

Nineteen years later perseverance pays off

Hang in there when the going gets tough. Take a breather, but never quit until you reach your goals.

By **NANCY PATTERSON**
Support Services Assistant
As told to Irene Brammertz

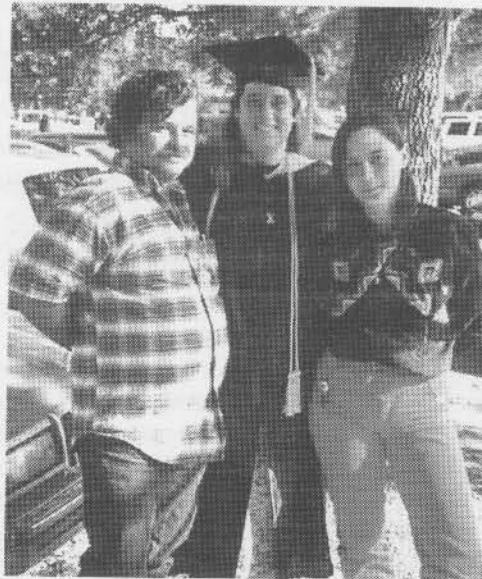
In 1990, after my twin daughters were enrolled at Fellsmere Child Development Center's Pre-K program, I became a parent volunteer. As a parent volunteer, I decided to start working on my CDA before becoming employed by RCMA during that summer.

I started working as a teacher trainee in August 1990 and was awarded my CDA in May 1991. At that time I was promoted to senior teacher and continued to work in that capacity for four years. I later became education coordinator.

I am currently the support services assistant at Indian River Migrant Head Start.

After completing 18 college credits between 1979 and 1981, I stopped.

In 1993 a number of staff from the Indian River area enrolled at Indian River Community College. Spurred on



Nancy Patterson, with her husband, Pat, and 13-year-old daughter, Melinda.

by their enthusiasm, I re-enrolled too. This time I was more determined than ever to get a degree. But my area of interest had changed. I had my sights set on Early Childhood Education. Going to college with other RCMA staffers was great motivation.

When they took a break, I took a

breather too—about a whole year's worth. Then I decided that I had already put so much effort into this that I was going to finish. But I soon found out that now it took even more discipline because a lot of the classes needed for my degree were self-study courses.

I graduated in May, receiving my Associate Degree with high honors—a 3.72 GPA. Ever since returning to college in 1993 I have had all A's.

My daughters, now 13 years old, are very proud of me. I feel that I have been a good role model for them and that they will follow my lead and decide on a college education for themselves too.

My advice to anyone who thinks this is too hard: Yes, it was very difficult at times. If I can do it, so can you. The difference is to hang in there when the going gets tough. Take a breather, but never quit until you reach your goals. □

Willie Mae

(Continued from page 1)

more of the same. By the time she makes it to the preschool room she has given and received all of the hugs she needs. Then it's back to doing what she knows best, cooking delicious meals for all.

Willie Mae has had her share of rough times and disappointments, but she didn't let them get in the way of creating greater opportunities for her children.

Her children are scattered from Seattle to Nashville and as far south as Fort Lauderdale. Among them are two college graduates and three high school graduates with diverse occupations that include counselor, minister, licensed truck driver, Florida Power and Light Safety Manager, Women Infant Children (WIC) employee, saxophone player, actor and entertainer.

Willie Mae smiles at the opportunities her ten grandchildren will have and she offers this advice to all parents: "Always take time with your kids, listen to them, know when and how to discipline, show interest in their school work and show them that faith and hard work are important." □



DAY OF THE CHILD FESTIVAL: Children from Wimauma Migrant Head Start and Wimauma Child Development Center recently had fun celebrating this event as part of Week of the Young Child. Nearly 200 children participated from these two centers.

Editor: Gerard Lambert
Staff Writers: Leslie Moguil Mike Clark
Please send suggestions, comments, and Letters to the Editor to the following address:
RCMA HOY Editor,
Redlands Christian Migrant Association
402 West Main Street, Immokalee, FL 34142
PHONE: 1-800-282-6540 **FAX:** 1-941-658-3606

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NOTICIAS DE PADRES

MAYO/JUNIO 1998 Núm. 14 Suplemento Bimensual de RCMA HOY en Envolvimiento de Padres

Hombres Hablan: Soluciones a la crisis de Paternidad

HOMBRES HABLAN: Conversaciones reales acerca de la comunidad, educación y los niños

Este no es solamente un título políticamente correcto, es el nombre de un grupo de padres en Arcadia.

El grupo de hombres es la creación de Kevin Richardson, Especialista de Apoyo a la Familia en el Centro de Desarrollo Smith Brown.

Cuando Kevin vino a trabajar a RCMA en enero, él quería envolver más a los padres en paternidad responsable y se le ocurrió que los hombres podían ayudar a desarrollar la comunidad. Una comunidad armoniosa produce mejores niños.

En la sociedad dividida de hoy hay demasiados hogares con uno solo de los padres. Los padres quizás estén pagando por el sostenimiento de los niños pero esto no es suficiente para crear un lazo de unión con los niños.

A pesar de que muchos padres no viven en la misma casa con sus hijos, estos aún pueden involucrarse. La meta de Kevin era romper las barreras que evitan que los padres se envuelvan activamente.

Para enero Kevin tenía el compromiso de 24 hombres para unirse al grupo y para finales de febrero el número había crecido a 40. Ellos se subieron las mangas y comenzaron a trabajar. Como su primer proyecto, ellos

escogieron celebrar el mes de historia de la raza negra con la primera reunión anual de familias negras en el Parque Lewis C. Anderson en Arcadia. Se les pidió a los negocios locales que contribuyeran con comidas y sodas.

Las invitaciones se enviaron a cinco áreas del condado y las personas vinieron. Por lo menos 3000 personas asistieron. Ellos disfrutaron de la barbacoa, entretenimiento en vivo, torneo de tenis, show de talento local y los amigos nuevos que

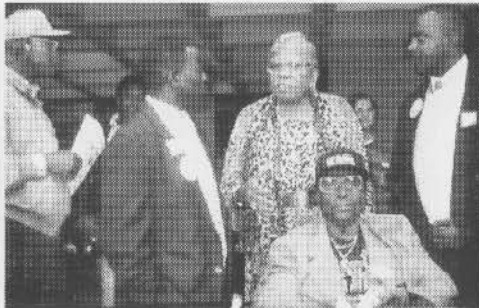


Foto por Robert Tucker
Haciendo conexiones para asuntos de los migrantes en Tallahassee (de izq. a der.) Fred Carter, D. Washington, Rep. Estado Sra. Dennis (D-Jacksonville), Kevin Richardson y oficial del NAACP de Arcadia Helen Washington (sentada).

hicieron.

La policía reportó que a pesar del grupo tan enorme no tuvieron incidentes y que todo el mundo estaba contento y disfrutando.

Desde este primer evento, Kevin y el grupo han organizado un concierto en la noche, un show de talento local con los niños y para el momento que este periódico salga a la imprenta, ellos van a tener una actividad en toda la co-

munidad para celebrar la Pascua.

Los miembros de este grupo incluyen algunos estudiantes de escuela secundaria que estuvieron en el programa de RCMA, otros son padres de niños registrados en RCMA y otros son hombres de la comunidad en general. Ellos están entre las edades de 17 hasta 50 años. Lo que tienen en común es que quieren poner en acción lo que hablan: Los hombres hablan: *Conversaciones reales acerca de la comunidad, educación y los niños.*

Si usted desea ayuda para comenzar un grupo de hombres en su área, Kevin estará muy contento en ayudarle.

Pueden llamar a Kevin al 941-993-4750.

La Crisis de la Paternidad - algunos puntos:

- En 1960, menos de 8 millones de niños en Estados Unidos vivían en hogares donde faltaba el padre.
- Hoy, cerca de 23 millones de niños viven en esa situación.
- 4 de cada 10 niños no viven en la misma casa con su padre.
- Se espera que para los niños que nacieron en los años 1990, 6 de cada 10 niños van a vivir en un hogar sin padre.

Editor: Irene G. Brammertz

Favor de enviar noticias, ideas o sugerencias sobre involucrimiento de padres en su centro a:

Noticias de Padres Editor, Redlands Christian Migrant Association, P.O. Box 207, Ruskin, FL 33570

Telefono: 813-671-5270

Traducción Español: Josie Gracia

Fax: 813-671-5272

PARENT NEWS

MAY/JUNE 1998 Issue 14 A Bi-Monthly Parent Involvement Supplement of RCMA HOY

Men Talk: Solutions to the Fatherhood Crisis

MEN TALK: Real Talk about Community, Education & Kids

This isn't just a politically correct title, it is the name of a group of fathers at Arcadia.

The men's group is the brainchild of Kevin Richardson, Family Support Specialist at Smith Brown Child Development Center.

When Kevin came to work for RCMA in January he wanted to get men more involved with responsible fatherhood and he figured that men could help to develop the community. A harmonious community equals better kids.

In today's fragmented society there are just plain too many one-parent households. Father's are there paying child support, but is that enough to bond with their children? Hardly.

Although many fathers do not live in the same household with their kids, they can still be involved. Kevin's goal was to break down the barriers that keep fathers from being actively involved.

By January Kevin had a commitment of 24 men to join the group and by late February that number had swelled to about 40. They rolled up their sleeves and went to work. For

their first project, they chose to celebrate black history month with the first ever annual black family reunion at Lewis C. Anderson Park in Arcadia. Local businesses were asked to contribute food and soft drinks.

Invitations went out to a five county area -- and they came. At least 3000 persons attended. They enjoyed the BBQ, live entertainment, a tennis tournament, local talent show and made new friendships.



Photo by Robert Tucker
Lobbying in Tallahassee for Migrant Issues (l to r) Fred Carter, D. Washington, State Rep. Dennis (D-Jacksonville), Kevin Richardson and Arcadia NAACP official Helen Washington (seated in front).

The police reported that in spite of the huge crowd they had no incidents and that everybody was happy and enjoying themselves.

Since this first momentous event Kevin and his group organized an evening concert, a talent show of local children and, by the time this goes to print, they will have had their community-wide Easter Egg Hunt.

The members in this group include some High School seniors, which are former "RCMA babies", others are fathers of children currently enrolled at RCMA and some are men from the community at large. They range in age from 17 to around 50 years old. What they have in common is that they like to put their action where their mouth is: *Men Talk: Real Talk about Community, Education and Kids.*

If you would like technical assistance in starting a men's group in your area, Kevin will be glad to help you.

Kevin can be reached at 941-993-4750.

The Fatherhood Crisis - some facts:

- In 1960, less than 8 million children in the US lived in father-absent homes.
- Today, about 23 million children live in that situation.
- 4 out of 10 children currently do not live in the same house as their father.
- It is expected that for children born in the 1990s as many as 6 out of 10 will live in a fatherless home.

Editor: Irene G. Brammertz

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

HOY Parent News Editor, Redlands Christian Migrant Association, P.O. Box 207, Ruskin, FL 33570

Phone: 813-671-5270

Spanish Translation: Josie Gracia

Fax: 813-671-5272