

RCMA HOY

Redlands Christian Migrant Association

We Can Make
A World of
Difference

Helping Our Youth



July 2001

Issue 99

OUR MISSION: "We open doors to opportunities" "Abrimos puertas a las oportunidades"

RCMA Charter School Shines!

It is 8:15 in the morning, the small brightly colored building is alive with activity. Three boys kick a soccer ball on the green. Several girls are gathered together under a tent around a wooden picnic table discussing whatever is most important to teen-age girls on this particular day. There is an overwhelming feeling of freedom and belonging.

I keep a safe distance, with camera in hand, not to interrupt the chatter. When the moment was right I told the group I was working on a story for the HOY, and asked if they would talk to me about the Immokalee Charter School Summer Program. Ashley, Norma, Leslie, Brittany, Cecilia, Samantha, and Davina gave a verbal universal yes, with a few head nods, and we all gathered around the picnic table. The majority of the group was just here for the summer program, with a few returning to 7th grade at the Charter next year.

When asked what they thought of the summer program, there was a non-hesitant unanimous expression of approval. These girls were in touch with the structure of the program, after only one week. Well what a host of activities they described – academics, weekly field trips, they went to Gatorama last week, where they reported seeing alligators, crocs, monkeys, peacocks, ostriches and deer. Jungle Larry's was coming up, but the most enthusiasm was felt for Sun Splash (the ultimate in water parks), which they told me was at the end of the summer program.

One girl commented that computers were her favorite, suddenly one of her peers quickly jumped into the conversation and corrected her – "that's technology lab" she said. There is swimming, dance class, music, art and Spanish class daily with

Mr. Preciado or Mr. Limon. The big favorite in this group was drama, under the competent direction of Joe Babb, of the Florida Repertory Company. I delved further, "what is it that so good about drama?" *We get to act out things, Mr. Babb is great! He will give us a little information and then we act out our own ideas.* "Can you give me an example?" *Well yesterday we did commercials, and our commercial was about a cereal that we created and how the family we created loved it.*

In our effort to look at both sides of the story I asked the girls who had gone to the Charter last year, what was the hardest part about going? It wasn't a specific subject matter, or teacher, or P.E., it was that which is most important to teens, *I really miss my friends.* A perfect entry into an invitation to snap a photo of a new group of friends. Permission was granted to strike a pose and they gladly did. I thanked them all for their time and proceeded to explore all that they had shared with me.

In Mr. Preciado's Spanish class the subject at hand was clothing. Now, Mr. Preciado may have had a plan, but my suspicion is he went with the kids interest. A simple lesson that started with writing descriptive words and the verbs needed to make complete sentences, with small focus on gender and adjective placement turned into a brilliant activity. Teams formed, and each wrote down their description of what their partner was wearing. Upon completion



CHARTER, Continued on page 3

**FROM
THE
DESK
OF
BARBARA**



“I am very pleased and proud that our area coordinators have come up with such clear direction for our family service staff – which includes all staff in centers and programs.”

**DEL ESCRITORIO DE
BARBARA**

“Estoy muy contenta y orgullosa de que nuestras coordinadoras de area hayan aportado direcciones claras para nuestro personal de servicio familiar- que incluye todo los empleados en los centros y programas.”

Helping our families succeed!

Parent Involvement is what has always made RCMA special. We hire from the community in which we serve in order to make sure that parents are dealing with people who are sensitive to their cultures, languages and lifestyles. Our area coordinators represent our families. Recently, at a meeting of all the area coordinators there was a discussion about parent involvement, which we now call family services. This new term makes sure no one, grandparents, aunts etc. are left out when we think and plan for involvement.

The area coordinators decided we open doors to opportunities for families by helping family members develop the following:

- Positive self esteem and self confidence**
- Parenting skills**
- Social skills**
- Problem solving skills**
- Life management skills**

When families think about their goals and/or write a Family Partnership Agreement, everything they want will depend on one of the above. For example, getting a driver's license requires self-confidence, social skills and problem solving skills. Buying a house of your own requires self-confidence, life management skills and problem solving skills. Dealing better with a troubled teenager or two-year-old requires parenting skills and life management skills, at a minimum.

I am very pleased and proud that our area coordinators have come up with such clear direction for our family service staff – which includes all staff in centers and programs. Specifically, our outreach and family support workers may now get a better sense of their accomplishments. This is another example of how we in RCMA keep working to improve our services. Thank you, Area Coordinators, for a job well done!!

¡Ayudando nuestras familias triunfar!

El involucimiento de padres es lo que siempre ha hecho a RCMA especial. Para asegurar que los padres traten con personas que son sensibles a sus culturas, idiomas y estilos de vida, empleamos personas de la comunidad a la que servimos. Nuestras Coordinadoras de Area representan estas familias. Recientemente durante una reunion de las coordinadoras hubo discusion sobre el involucimiento de padres, a el cual ahora le nombramos servicios familiares. Este termino nuevo nos asegura que nadie, ni abuelos, tios, etc., queden excluidos cuando pensamos y planeamos el involucimiento familiar.

Las coordinadoras de area decidieron abrir las puertas de las oportunitades a las familias ayudandole a los miembros desarrollar lo siguiente:

- Estima positiva y confianza en si mismo**
- Experencia para ser mejores padres**
- Habilidades sociales**
- Tecnicas para resolver problemas**
- Manejo de sus vidas**

Cuando las familias piensan sobre sus metas y/o las escriben en el Acuerdo Familiar de Servicios, todo lo que deseen dependera de una de estas habilidades. Por ejemplo, sacar una licencia de conducir quiere, confianza en si mismo, habilidad social y tecnica para resolver problemas. Comprar su propia casa requiere, confianza en si mismo, manejo de su vida y saber como resolver problemas. Para manejar un adolescente y un niño de dos años se necesita por lo minimo tener experencia como padres y tener la habilidad para manejar su vida.

Estoy muy contenta y orgullosa de que nuestras coordinadoras de area hayan aportado direcciones claras para nuestro personal de servicio familiar- que incluye todo los empleados en los centros y programas. Especificamente, nuestras trabajadoras de alcance y de apoyo familiar, las cuales ahora tendran un mejor sentido de sus logros. Este es otro ejemplo en como nosotros en RCMA seguimos trabajando para mejorar nuestro servicios. Gracias Coordinadoras de Area por un trabajo bien hecho!!

CHARTER, Continued from page 1

the description was read aloud as their partner came down the runway to model, complete with the background music of Ricky Martin and Angela. The lesson was a big hit!

Dance class began under the patient direction of Irma Cabrieles. A group of first and second graders came into the room. A circle was formed, traditional Mexican music filled the room as the children gave it their best in duplicating the basic steps. Once mastered there will be a grand production of traditional dance for parents, staff and community members. One of the dances will be the "Machete" where large knives are used as props, and instruments throughout the dance. At the end of the class Mrs. Cabrieles demonstrated the dance with her son. As she pulled the large props out, the mouths of babes dropped, as one little boy exclaimed, "my mom will not let me play with knives".



In today's drama class the topic was "plot". Students began arriving quickly. Two students popped their heads in and asked if they could come to drama. "Next period is your turn", Mr. Babb, said. The students replied, "can't we take it twice?" Another thumbs up for drama. Students had the opportunity to view a portion of the video "Romeo and Juliet" after a discussion about plot and characters. All watched intently. Questions were asked along the way and Mr. Babb responded and interjected.



The program is also lucky to have three Mexican exchange teachers, Arceli Blanco, Angelica Villarreal, and Jose Juan who are helping with the program this summer along with the Charter School teacher team of Pete Cade, Jean Eklund, Ramiro Cavazos, Yvonne Medina and Olga Rodriguez. AmeriCorps volunteers are also actively involved in providing tutoring for the children.

As I leave the program I smile at the limitless potential that children have when they are truly allowed to bloom!

RCMA recognized as a "Program of Achievement"

With an audience of RCMA Policy Council members, staff and a room full of attendees, the National Head Start



Association presented Barbara Mainster, Executive/Head Start Director with a Lucite Head Start logo sculpture recognizing RCMA as a "Program of Achievement".

This award was granted to RCMA after an intense examination of all of RCMA's systems and services which benefit children, families and staff. This award is given to programs that not only meet Head Start Performance Standards, but those who exceed them.

Some of the strengths that the N.H.S.A. panel recognized were RCMA's knowledge of the communities served; the blending of many funding sources for programs that make sense for children and families; the agency having a clear vision, mission, and value statement; the documentation of a strong Transition Project and a dedication to a sound parent involvement philosophy; family support caseloads of the program were considered exemplary; the demonstration of excellent classroom strategies and opportunities for families in the area of cultural competence; and the agency's public education and public relations systems are extensive and strong.



Barbara Mainster had this to say upon receiving the award, "I am extremely proud of all the hard work, dedication and commitment to the children and families we serve. The staff truly deserves this special recognition."

Health Insurance - Why is it important?

The numbers are in from the first ever insurance survey on our staff. Some staff were reluctant to tell us about their age and other facts about themselves when centers were called on to gather this information. Before making any conclusions about the data, we removed all of the names. Here is what we know about our staff:

Staff without health insurance

33.3% (exactly one third!)

Staff's children without health insurance

25.7% (one quarter!)

Average age of staff: 37 years

Females: 92.5%

Males: 7.5%

Bilingual or multi-lingual staff: 62.7%

Completed High School/G.E.D. or higher: 72%

Pretty impressive? Yes! Can we improve? Yes, of course. Many staff are already actively involved in continuing their education, and are attending classes.

Hopefully, many staff have signed up for Blue Cross/Blue Shield insurance coverage through RCMA for the 2001-2002 season. We would like to see more than two thirds of our staff enjoy the peace of mind that health insurance coverage brings.

Health insurance is especially important for children. With health insurance also comes a "*Medical Home*": a place where the child goes for regular check-ups, vaccinations and for treatment in cases of illness or accidents. This is the place the child knows and where the medical history of the child is kept.

If you, or any of your co-workers, still have children (under 19) living in your household (your own, grandkids or foster children) that have no insurance coverage, please apply or help others apply for Florida KidCare. Income limit to be eligible for 2001 is \$35,300 for a family of four. If you need more information about Florida KidCare, please ask your Family Support Specialist, Health Specialist or call Irene at the Ruskin office 813-671-5264 X234. Please look for next year's survey soon! We count on your feedback!

Awesome team comes together to learn



The Indian River Area Office played host to 25 facilities staff from all over the state. Two trainers provided some important safety tips on using tools and equipment safely, as well as reviewing the importance of using safety goggles and back braces. Lunch was provided compliments of the center parents.

Tommy Estrada, from the Immokalee area, said "he found the lawn mowing safety tips to be the most important. Especially when they had to do with child safety as it relates to the potential of accidents if lawnmowers and children are present in close quarters. Tommy said, "he never mows when there are children around, and always wears glasses, it's just too dangerous".

As part of a teambuilding exercise participants built a new ADA accessible ramp for the Fellsmere CDC. Task were divided up and it turned out to be quite efficient. The ramp was completed in 1 1/2 hours. Memo Preciado, facilities manager is in his 5th month with RCMA. He enjoys his job and his happy with the dedication and commitment he has seen from facilities staff. He and Dana Reeves, benefits and risk manager have plans to coordinate two similar training events for next year!

Editor: Leslie Moguil
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: 1-941-658-3571

Any time, any
day, any problem.
When you need
someone
to talk to,
LifeBalance is
there.
1-800-811-2849



**Enjoy time
spent with
your family
this
summer!**