

# WCELI Update

News from the **White Center Early Learning Initiative**, a Thrive by Five Washington Community

Spring 2009

## Greetings from WCELI

Happy Spring! It is time to update you on a flurry of WCELI activity over the past couple months. We've been busy!

Our home-based early learning programs are building relationships with more than fifty-five White Center families and caseloads are growing. Lois Schipper of Seattle & King County Public Health and Sheila Capestany of Open Arms Perinatal Services update their agencies' activities on page three.

Thirty-three White Center providers have begun the "Seeds to Success" field test, improving quality at their childcare centers. Caroline Shelton of Child Care Resources outlines the goals of the field test on page two.

Construction of the new Educare Center is nearly 25% complete and the building will open in early 2010. Since January we have received several large grants. We are training staff, picking out furniture and preparing for the big grand opening. John Bancroft of Puget Sound ESD describes the services that will be offered in the center on page two.

WCELI sponsored a "Fundraising 101" training on April 29 at White Center Heights Elementary for community service providers and residents. In these troubled times, we hope that more White Center advocates will improve their fundraising skills to better position the community to weather economic challenges.

Community members and service providers on the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) offer guidance and support to WCELI leadership, serving as ambassadors with the community. They recently co-sponsored the White Center Providers Fair (see CAC member Jeri Finch's writeup on page three). The committee is seeking more members—please call (425) 917-7707 for applications.

We recently completed a comprehensive budget planning process and submitted a two-year grant request to our funders, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Thrive by Five Washington. While drafting a new budget, we looked for opportunities to better knit together all WCELI services to ensure that we are serving White Center children and families most efficiently, with a special focus on hard-to-reach families. We will share the funders' response to the request in future WCELI Updates.

As always, please let us know your thoughts and ideas about how WCELI services can better serve the White Center community. We are excited about the progress that we are seeing, and for children and families whose lives we believe will be improved by WCELI services. We also know that we can do better, with your help.

## Visit Our Website!



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**[www.wceli.org](http://www.wceli.org)**

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## Comprehensive Standards and Supports for Quality Child Care

What is quality child care? Phrases we hear connected to this word are often: belonging, warmth, engaged families, stimulating, learning opportunities, reflects cultures, meaningful interactions, accessible, and safe.

Child care providers in White Center have been talking for years at a community level about what quality is to them. Through WCELL, they and the families they serve are about to experience a comprehensive approach to making quality improvements.

A modified version of *Seeds to Success*, the State's pilot Quality Rating and

Improvement System (QRIS), launched this March in White Center. The state's dream for QRIS was put on hold in December 2008 due to State budget reductions, so now White Center and East Yakima are the only two communities in the state that are currently testing the QRIS.

A QRIS is a comprehensive system to assess, support and communicate about quality in child care settings. The emphasis of this field test is to see how resources such as professional development, early learning coaching and quality improvement grants impact quality.

Thirty-three child care businesses in White Center have chosen to participate in the field test of the QRIS. Providers attended an orientation on March 21st, and have since started requesting funding for professional development and have begun working with their coaches. The field test is currently scheduled to end on December 31, 2009. We hope that we'll all benefit from some valuable lessons learned and real opportunities for programs in White Center to make tangible gains in quality improvement for their programs, and most importantly, the children in their care.

- Caroline Shelton, Child Care Resources

## Educare Learning Center at Greenbridge

Construction is in high gear for the Educare Learning Center, which will be completed by the end of 2009. The center is located just across the parking lot from the White Center Heights Elementary School in White Center's Greenbridge community. The building, on land donated to PSESD Educare by the King County Housing Authority, will be a beautiful early learning center with exciting outdoor play areas.



The Educare Learning Center (ELC) will be WCELL's hub for offering opportunities for all young children and their families in White Center. The ELC will provide on-site care and early learning for 134 children from birth to five, including 32 infants and toddlers and 102 three- and four- year-olds. The center will be open all day and all year, allowing parents to work or attend school knowing that their children are cared for by skilled teachers in a nurturing environment. Parents will receive a broad variety of family support and parent development services to help them get their children ready for school and life. The ELC is one of ten centers in six states that comprise the national Educare initiative.

In addition to services for enrolled families, the ELC will provide opportunities for all White Center caregivers to gather, enhance their child development skills, and build a community-wide movement that supports all young children to get ready for kindergarten. Two training rooms will be available for classes, parent events, and community meetings. There will be opportunities for hands-on learning, working with English language learners, providing services for children with disabilities, and developing all children's social skills and artistic creativity. Providers from the entire White Center community will receive support in delivering services that are of high quality, culturally responsive and parent-driven.

-John Bancroft, Educare Learning Center





## Open Arms Graduates First Outreach Doula Class

On April 11th, Open Arms graduated the first group of trainees for the Outreach Doula Program. Outreach doulas are women who provide support to childbearing women and their families during pregnancy, birth and up to two years after a child is born. The outreach doula training was an intensive six-month training which included class time, observations of prenatal and postpartum visits in a health care setting, observation of childbirth preparation classes, and attendance as a doula at three births. The WCELI Outreach Doula Program will be implemented in both the Somali and Latina communities in White Center.

The six women who attended the outreach doula training are truly remarkable. They were committed, passionate, and willingly shared their own cultural values and practices throughout the training, making it a rich learning process for everyone. Open Arms will hire four outreach doulas in June to begin serving women and their families in White Center. Watch the Summer WCELI newsletter for information on how to make referrals for these services.

Congratulations Burhan, Hawa, Haydee, Libin, Margarita, and Yen – Open Arms is proud to have taken this journey with you!

*-Sheila Capestany, Open Arms Perinatal Services*



## Home Visiting Services: Openings Still Available

Seattle & King County Public Health continues to enroll clients in WCELI home visiting services and has current openings for the following programs:

**Nurse Family Partnership:** Open to first time, low-income pregnant women age 23 and under who are in the first or second trimester of pregnancy.

**Enhanced First Steps:** Open to women/families who are pregnant and receiving WIC or First Steps services and live in the WCELI area. Enhanced First Steps serves families who would benefit from additional support through pregnancy and the first two years with their new baby.

**Home Visits for all families in the WCELI area with a new baby:** Nurse home visits are available for all families with a newborn who live in the WCELI area. If you know of a family with a baby less than two weeks old, have them call to arrange a visit!

For more information or to enroll or refer someone for services contact Lois Schipper at (206) 205-7273 or [lois.schipper@kingcounty.gov](mailto:lois.schipper@kingcounty.gov)

*-Lois Schipper, Seattle & King County Public Health*

## White Center Provider's Early Learning Fair

Set the scene: A school cafeteria filled with people speaking in their home languages, enjoying a meal and anticipating their upcoming classes. This could be any school in the White Center area, but this was a gathering of early learning professionals coming together for the White Center Provider's Early Learning Fair.

The White Center Providers, an organization working together to support, educate and empower early learning professionals, represents child care centers, family home childcare, preschools, and friends and family care. On March 14, 2009, the 2nd Annual Early Learning Fair was held at White Center Heights Elementary. More than 150 people attended; 115 were providers. Three hours of professional development, or STARS, were provided for attendees by CCR and WCELI. The classes were in math/science, music, development/guidance and financial

management. In one of the classes, Circle Time Music, participants shared songs with each other in four different languages. Resource personnel from the local colleges, banks, the fire department, library, and early

learning organizations participated in a vendor fair along with Kaplan, For Kidz only, Lakeshore and Usborne books. Time was set aside to network with others as well as plan for continuing education.

This event was sponsored by the WCELI Community Advisory Committee, Thrive by Five Washington, CCR, White Center CDA, Foundation for Early Learning and the White Center Kiwanis. Everyone went home enthused, inspired and with a free bag of goodies. Barb Culler, instructor from Renton Tech, stated, "The moment I received the email inviting us to participate, I replied with a definite yes. This is a great fair!"

*-Jeri Finch,  
WCELI Community Advisory Committee*



# WCELI Announcements

## Changes to the WCELI Team

Some changes are ahead for the WCELI team. Stephan Blanford has resigned from his position as Executive Director for WCELI, effective May 22, 2009. We extend our sincere thanks to Stephan for his work in establishing a foundation for the Initiative and wish him the very best as he continues to pursue his doctorate degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Washington.

In this time of leadership transition, the PSESD remains steadfast in its commitment to provide responsive and quality leadership for WCELI. John Bancroft and Tracey Yee, both of whom have been active in WCELI from the very beginning, along with WCELI staff Vanessa Maanao, Sarita Siqueros Thornburg, and Nubia Lopez, will continue to work with the community and partners. They will actively pursue additional funding sources to augment services for the Initiative and the White Center Community.

We look forward to working with you to continue to move our collective good works forward.



The White Center Early Learning Initiative (WCELI) is a partnership of community members and public and private organizations working to create integrated and accessible child development and family support services in White Center. Funded by grants from Thrive by Five Washington and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, WCELI provides education and support for parents, caregivers, and child care and early learning staff to help ensure that all children in the community begin school ready to succeed.

**For more information on WCELI, visit [www.wceli.org](http://www.wceli.org), or contact:** John Bancroft, Puget Sound Educational Service District, 800 Oakesdale Ave SE., Renton, WA, 98057, 425-917-7625, [jbancroft@psed.org](mailto:jbancroft@psed.org).



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