

Kids Count Celebrates Successful 2010-2011 Program

In the fall we shared with you everything that went into the research, planning and implementation of the newly-designed Kids Count at Faith United Methodist Church After-School Program. Now, we are pleased to share the successes! This year children in the program received one hour of one-on-one tutoring from aspiring teachers on Tuesdays and Thursdays of each week for the majority of the academic school year. This resulted in 40 hours of literacy-

focused extra help for each student. Results from a pre and post literacy assessment reveal that kindergarten and first grade students have improved their phonological awareness skills from a cumulative average of 64% to 80% and have demonstrated increased alphabet knowledge, increasing from 82% to 90%. Additionally, second and third grade students have demonstrated increases in reading comprehension, improving from 72% to 77%. According to Ms. Acosta, "this initial data shows that afterschool



A songwriting session with professional musician (daughter of Kathy and John Vance) Eve Fleishman

"Creating an environment where students are able to practice reading with the immediate guidance and help from an adult, as with one-on-one tutoring, is really the best structure if you want to improve reading" explains Program Director Melanie Acosta.

programs that implement effective literacy practices in a structured setting can have a positive impact on student reading achievement".

Tutors received intensive training where they learned how to implement effective literacy practices with their students. In addition, the

partnership built with the University of Florida College of Education enabled student tutors to receive ongoing support. Plans to continue this partnership, as well as further refine the tutoring component for the next school year are already underway.

Kids Count acknowledges the following for their tremendous impact in making the 2010-2011 year successful: Melanie Acosta, Program Director, for her work in developing and implementing the tutoring program, Ashley Lieser for intelligently and compassionately serving as Site Director for most of the year (up until her and Jason's baby girl, Grace, was born!), current program staff Brittny Capron, Katie Gerhardt and Stephanie Bennett, Board members Dorene Ross and Kathy Vance, who have been strategically involved in all phases of program development, and all of the student and community volunteers who spent time with the kids. The groundwork that has been laid will impact children in this community for years to come. ●

Look what else Kids Count kids experienced this year!



Participating in the Presidential Physical Fitness Award Program

Field trips to Morningside Nature Center and the Santa Fe Zoo



A presentation on hiking the Appalachian Trail by Charme Burns

Arts and Crafts with Trinity UMC volunteers



A show by magician Daniel Morgan

Enjoying some R&R time!

The Kids Count Vision

The Vision of Kids Count in Alachua County, Inc., a nonprofit organization, is that all elementary children in the community who need extra support to succeed in school and life will have that opportunity. To work towards this vision, Kids Count partners with schools, churches and other organizations to offer highly effective programs that inspire hope, enhance learning, improve confidence and build life skills. Kids Count provides qualified staff, volunteers and expertise for the programs it supports.

Kids Count is pleased to announce being named a 2011 recipient of the Alice W. Lockmiller Church School Award. Funds will be used to provide healthy snacks for the Kids Count at Faith United Methodist Church after school program.

A Heartfelt Thank You to Linda Cook

Kids Count extends its warmest thanks to Linda Cook, outgoing Board Treasurer. Linda used her skills as a retired association administrator to raise the level of professionalism in the finance, accounting and bookkeeping systems as well as managed the formulation and expansion of the human resources functions. She has handled auditing and budget development as well as payroll for four employees. Linda's dedicated service has resulted in Kids Count's readiness for continued expansion and growth. Linda, thank you for all you have done for Kids Count during these past two years! ●

A Message from the President

Kids Count's vision is for all of our community's elementary children to reach their full potential, and we take this vision very seriously. During the 2010-2011 school year we focused staff, board, and volunteer efforts on the Kids Count at Faith UMC pilot program to better serve children now and to prepare for serving more children in the years to come. We revised the structure of the program, added a literacy tutoring component, and brought in new expertise. Our goal is for the Kids Count after school program to be highly effective while also being sustainable and reproducible.

I want to thank three key people. Melanie Saxon, the Kids Count Operations Manager, has provided critical behind the scenes support for almost two years; she will be leaving Kids Count this summer and we wish her the very best. Ashley Lieser served as Kids Count Site Director and was the key leader in both managing our pilot program and helping us through many changes this year. Melanie Acosta, a UF Ph.D. candidate, was the Kids Count Program Director and created the new literacy component that is one of this year's real successes.

And what about the children? Academic progress data is being compiled and reviewed, but I can tell you that our literacy program has made a positive impact on a majority of the Kids Count children. As you know, Kids Count is not just about academics but also about serving the whole child, and this newsletter will highlight just a few of the things, from regular enrichment to social skill building, that was so important in how we supported the children this year.

Thank you to all the many volunteers and donors who absolutely make our work with children possible. Please know that Kids Count doesn't happen without you.

Ward Simonton, Ph.D.

Board President, Kids Count in Alachua County

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Faith United Methodist Church
for sharing their facility

Trinity United Methodist Church
for ongoing financial and in-kind support

Tower Hill Insurance Group, Inc.
for donation of laptops and other equipment for the kids

The Kiwanis Club of Gainesville
for supporting the Rawlings Garden Program

Kevin & Martha Crosier, Master Gardeners,
for leading the Garden Program

Satchel's and Mamma Mia Pizza
for supporting special Kids Count events

Imagine Arts
for partial in-kind donation of website design

James Kirk
for in-kind computer services

New! Yahoo-hosted Website



In May we were pleased to roll out the new Kids Count website: www.kidscountalachuacounty.org. Designed by Kate Robinson-Chavez of Imagine Arts, the new site includes the following features: ability to make a donation online using PayPal, ability for potential volunteers to have access to all of the necessary information about volunteering as well as express an interest in volunteering by clicking directly from the site.

In addition, Kids Count encourages everyone to become a fan of its new Facebook fan page – Kids Count in Alachua County. ●



had the opportunity to plant, tend and harvest a variety of organic vegetables and herbs. After the harvest, students participated in a homemade pizza party which was attended by Kiwanis President Gwen Gadaire and members Dick Hughes and Bob Priscott. ●

BECOME A 2011-2012



Your Tax-Deductible Donation Counts for Kids!

See our website www.kidscountalachuacounty.org for giving levels. Consider using the PayPal feature to pay with your debit or credit card or return this coupon with your check made payable to Kids Count.

Name: _____
(as you wish it to appear in print)

Address: _____

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Kiwanis Continues as Sponsor of Rawlings Second Grade Garden Project

Kids Count thanks the Kiwanis Club for their ongoing sponsorship of the Rawlings Garden Project!

Under the direction of volunteer Master Gardeners Kevin and Martha Crosier, second graders





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Melanie Saxon, Operations Manager



Volunteer Spotlight

Kids Count was pleased to nominate John and Kathy Vance for the 2011 Work of Heart Volunteer Awards which celebrate the best

examples of volunteerism in Alachua County. As a retired educator, Kathy has been instrumental in the planning and implementation of the revamped Kids Count After-School Program. As Vice President of the Board of Directors, she oversees the program and supervises its three educational staff members. John, often before we could ask, has performed numerous acts of kindness for the program including participating in field trips with the children and making repairs to the building. Combined, John and Kathy have given over 200 hours of their time, making a tremendous impact on Kids Count's ability to provide a safe, quality after-school program. ●

Spring 2011 Kids Count Education Staff

Brittney Capron holds a Master's degree in Educational Technology and a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, both from the University of Florida.

Stephanie Bennett is a University of Florida student majoring in Family, Youth and Community Sciences.

Katie Bernhardt is currently earning her Master of Education Specialist in Mental Health Counseling degree at the University of Florida.

