

Community Foundation's Baby Steps Early Literacy Initiative Gains Momentum

A forty-five member advisory council made up of current and former educators, child care center directors, nonprofit agency staff, business and community leaders, and interested citizens has been meeting since last fall to address the issue of early literacy and its role in an individual's future success, an issue where national attention is focused on children from birth to age five - before they even enter the formal school system. Months of research have resulted in selecting four avenues of approach:



- Increasing accessibility to books and a "vocabulary-rich" environment
- Increasing the quality, availability and affordability of child care
- Providing early screening for learning and developmental disabilities
- Encouraging parental involvement and education as their children's first and most important teachers

The council has broken into four sub-committees, each charged with defining the need, identifying local talent and resources, and developing projects, timelines and appropriate budgets in one of the four areas.

Early successes in 2011 have included creating and equipping an early learning media center for the FACES pre-K program housed at Burroughs-Molette Elementary School, two workshops on early screening for developmental/learning disabilities, a Town Hall meeting featuring a presentation by the state chair of GEEARS (Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students), Stephanie Blank, and a service learning project for College of Coastal Georgia education students involving four local child care centers. In conjunction with the St. Simons Island Rotary Club, we have also formed a group of Rotary volunteers and trained them in audible reading techniques. These "Rotary Readers" are currently volunteering at the pre-K

center housed at Burroughs-Molette Elementary School.

Among the projects



proposed and waiting for funding are creating mini-libraries at public housing properties, creating literacy kits for use by local child care centers, creation of neighborhood reading groups, a directory of screening resources for identifying early learning disabilities, and assisting local child care centers with attaining additional credentialing and learning opportunities for staff and directors.

We need your active interest and financial support to make this community foundation initiative a community model for the state. Please contact community foundation director Lee Owen at 280-9202 or lowen@coastalgeorgiafoundation.org for more information.