

The Center's Children Say Thank You!

The Center gratefully acknowledges the generosity of its major donors during the first half of 2008.

All contributions help to make the Center's services affordable to low-income, working families in our community.

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Mission Statement

The Center exists to provide a comprehensive, high-quality early childhood program designed to give all young children, regardless of their family's economic resources, a strong foundation on which to build the rest of their lives.



Falls Church - McLean Children's Center
7230 Idylwood Road
Falls Church, VA 22043-2714

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Fall 2008 Newsletter
Elizabeth Page, Executive Director

Falls Church - McLean Children's Center

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Twenty-Three Children Graduate Into Kindergarten

Summer always brings a season of change to the Center. This year twenty-three children will leave to enter kindergarten. Fourteen of them received early intervention services, which aided considerably in their ability to develop age-appropriate skills for kindergarten—the Center's goal for all of its children. A full 87% of this year's graduates have age-appropriate skills and the other 13% have Individualized Education Plans in place to ensure continued progress.

Valerie Torrales, one of the Center's graduates, has attended for just over three years, and her graduation represents an exciting milestone for her family. Her mother, Belkis, learned about the Center while working as an in-home aid to a family with a child with significant special needs. She enrolled Valerie, and her then four-year-old son Brian, in 2005.



Valerie and Bryan

Says Belkis, "The Center has done so much for me and my children. Brian needed some extra help and they told me about special services he could get—I didn't even know these existed. And the financial help makes a huge difference. Without it, we couldn't come. My children always talk positively at home about school, and they

Continued on next page.

Save the Date!

First Annual Champions for Children Awards Dinner

Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Falls Church-McLean Children's Center

Thursday, October 2, 2008
6:00-9:30 p.m.
Westwood Country Club
Tickets \$75.00

Barbara Harrison, NBC 4
Mistress of Ceremonies

Please join the Center in recognizing Public Service Champion, Katherine Hanley

Philanthropic Champion,
Freddie Mac Foundation

Corporate Champion, **Capital One**

With Special Thanks to Gold Sponsor,

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For more information contact Wendy Baird at (703) 534-4907 or e-mail wendy_baird@fcmlcc.org.

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A birthday celebration with friends.

A devoted mother, Belkis makes family time a priority. She takes the children out to area parks and library events, and the three often play games together at home. It brings her special joy to see the children doing so well. "I feel so proud of all that they are doing," she comments.

The Center staff wish all of our children the very best as they move on to "big kids school." We will miss each of them.

Fairfax Futures Honors Elizabeth Page

Graduates, continued from cover

never wanted to leave when I came to get them. We all love it here."

Belkis and her two children have flourished in the past several years. After receiving accolades for her work as a volunteer in the classroom of the child for whom she cared, Belkis successfully applied for a position as a full time Teacher's Aide at Freedom Hill Elementary School. The job allows her more time at home with her own children and provides greater income. This fall, Valerie and Brian will enroll at Freedom Hill, making it easier to coordinate the family's schedule.

Below: Rainbow Room friends



The Center's Board of Directors is delighted to announce that Executive Director Elizabeth Page recently received the prestigious Fairfax Futures "School Readiness

Educator Award" in the early childhood education category.

Fairfax Futures is a non-profit organization whose mission is to ensure that the County's youngest children are well prepared to succeed in school and life.

At the awards presentation Elizabeth was honored for her "deep commitment to building partnerships that support the school readiness of young children and their families" and for her outstanding work in nurturing the Center's teachers. Congratulations, Elizabeth, on this well-deserved recognition!

Introducing Bernarda Rodriguez

Bernarda Rodriguez thoroughly enjoys teaching in the Explorers' Room, home to the Center's 2 ½ and young three year olds.



Above: Some of the Center's students share the Fairfax Futures award with Elizabeth Page.



A sendoff celebration for one of the Center's graduates.

"I like the little ones," she explains, "for most of them it's their first time in school and they're still so affectionate. They learn very quickly and it's exciting to watch."

As the fourth in a line of ten siblings, Bernarda grew up as a caretaker and always knew she wanted to work with children. She came to the United States from Chile over twenty years ago, and first worked as a nanny. Though she adored the children, she wanted a bigger challenge and found a position teaching in a pre-school in Alexandria.

Seeking a better fit, she answered a newspaper ad in 1999 for a job at the Center.

Since joining the Center, Bernarda has earned her Child Development Associate certificate and is now taking classes towards her Early Childhood Associates Degree at NOVA. "I like it here so much—the teachers, the parents, the children—everybody works together."

She especially appreciates the Center's mission and the chance to connect with the Center's many Spanish-speaking families. "The parents feel comfortable with me and I feel like I can really help them and make a difference. They work hard and don't make much money; the Center is so important because here their children learn English and get ready

for school. . . I see children getting extra help all the time and I know it makes a difference."

Outside of work, Bernarda makes time to walk and read, and, most importantly, she says with a smile, "spend time with my daughters Sofia and Michelle." To her delight, Michelle just finished her freshman year at Mary Washington University and is working at the Center this summer to further her work towards a degree in teaching.

How to Help

The Center gratefully appreciates the financial, in-kind, and energetic support of its donors and volunteers. To become a contributor to the Center, contact executive director Elizabeth Page at 703-534-4907.

The Center also welcomes donations for the classroom and volunteers to help work with children and keep the Center in great condition.

Our Wish List:

- Occasional volunteers to cover nap time while staff attend training meetings
- Fresh fruit for snacks
- Gift cards to grocery stores and gas stations
- Someone to sew cot sheets