WEST MIDLAND FAMILY CENTER'S

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ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR AREA RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES

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SUMMERTIME EVOKES THOUGHTS OF CHILDREN

We are blessed in Michigan with the privilege to experience season's change. Each season is alive with a unique personality: inviting the senses, evoking related memories.



Lee Township Firefighter, Kelli Bade visits a group of early elementary program participants.

All thoughts of summertime at WMFC are associated with children at play. Summer at the center surrounds us with activity and impacts our perceptions. Program participants are introduced to a multitude of inspiring activities chosen to positively impact their lives for years to come. These activities are designed to reach children on all levels by imparting information through all their senses. In other words, their learning occurs through adventure, creativity, fun, self-directed play including silliness and physical activity.

When walking the grounds at the center in the summer one is first struck with the sounds: all around laughter, dialogue, discussion, shouting (all in good nature, as a rule) words of encouragement, splashing, children reciting plays, bike tires on payement.

Just let me get my goggles on! Brandi, Colton, Carolyn, Morgan and Megan "splashing it up."

musical instruments and music, the sound of Walkie-Talkies as staff remain ever vigilant of the activity all around. Eyes are drawn to the parade of children in dress-up clothes, to the group of 'middle-schoolers' engaged in friendly competition, to the fire engine and firefighter with a group of young children huddled about. A T'NT mentor kneels to explain something to a younger child, face-to face.

Taste the homemade brownies, ice cream and strawberry freezer jam made by program participants and the pizza pocket, veggies and fruit a

sampling of the Allen Foundation provided lunch. Smell the scorching foliage and grass as children play in the backfield or challenge themselves on the low ropes course though the woods. One gathers the unmistakable essence of summer swimming: an outdoor pool, clean locker rooms.



Damien enjoying Pizza Pocket for lunch.

Feel the cool physical rejuvenation associated with that first jump in a pool on a hot summer day, the exhilaration of running hard, climbing jumping, rolling down a hill.

All these activities touch the senses with fond summer memories to be referenced as needed,

at a future time.

addition, child's sense of creativity and adventure is stimulated by the actual activities that are planned for them. Each week of the program is "themed." Age appropriate activities correspond to the week's theme. For example, dur-

ing friendship week 4th and 5th graders wrote post cards to pen pals, they spent time on an empathy writing project in which they were given a prompt to write about something that



Lorelei "curled up" with a good book!

required them to demonstrate empathy for someone else, i.e. "your friend is always chosen last...how can you help him feel better."

During safety week, children created a hero costume, made a hero award and they recorded safety songs of their own creation. During fitness week program participants created their own fitness product and a commercial to promote it, made fitness videos and created jump rope jingles. To promote the study of other cultures, teens made 'Passports.' Upon completion of each national study unit, their 'Passport' received a stamp for the respective country. Each of the "themed weeks" throughout the summer builds upon the week before, providing a well-rounded balance of meaningful and exciting activities that will be held as childhood memories for years to come. Summer is a time for fun and adventure, a time for creating memories, making friends, and being "child-like." WMFC summer program: where children run through the heat and humidity with one goal in mind...having fun. Such an ideal way to experience the summer season!



Junior Lifeguards learn about local pools. Left to Right & Front to Back, Shayna & Brooke, Britney & Emily, Leah, Gracee, Miranda & Brittney at SVSU pool site

FAREWELL MRS. FABINSKI...... CALLING ALL WMFC PRESCHOOL GRADUATES

Mrs. Fabinski is leaving! After eighteen years, WMFC Preschool Teacher Elaine Fabinski has decided it is time for a change. Over her many years of quiet dedication Elaine has provided devoted service to well over 500 preschoolers and their families: preparing little children to become lifelong learners, strengthening families and helping parents become advocates in the education of their children.

With so much history, this change is difficult to embrace. Elaine was among first teachers hired in the early years of West Midland's preschool. This fact caused Elaine to be quite innovative as



Racheal, Aspen and Paige making musical instruments.

We will seize the occasion of Mrs. Fabinski's departure to honor her, and all former teachers and students of WMFC Preschool Programs with a:

WMFC PRESCHOOL REUNION
Please plan to attend, mark your calendar now, for:
October 6, 2005
from 5:30-8:00 p.m.
Further details will follow as we prepare for this recognition party.

To be included on a mailing list for reunion updates: please call the Center at 832-3256.

she muddled with program "growing pains." With so much history, this change is difficult to embrace. Elaine was among first teachers hired in the early years of West Midland's preschool. This fact caused Elaine to be quite innovative as she muddled with program "growing pains." When Elaine began working at WMFC in 1987, she taught two classes for the Midland Preschool Centers Inc. (now defunct). In 1989, a third class of three and four year olds was added for WMFC. By this time, classes ran from 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. with thirty minutes between classes to set-up for the incoming class. No rest for the weary! Not only that, but at the time, the center couldn't afford to employ a teacher's assistant. By law, Elaine had to have another adult present. Undeterred, at the beginning of each class, Elaine turned from preschool teacher to vigilant recruiter, imploring parents to volunteer. Each day throughout the school year she convinced at least one parent from each class to stay, and preschool marched on. In doing this she not only kept the preschool running through a difficult time but she engaged sometimes reluctant parents in the lives of their children. At the same time the center had a budget of \$30 monthly for snack.....for 60 children! As such, Elaine essentially supplied all the snacks out of her own grocery money.

From these challenging beginnings Elaine persisted to oversee the development of all of WMFC's early childhood programs. She was



Mrs. Fabinski and her happy preschoolers.



Field trip to the Library: Parent volunteer Shelly reads to her daughter Mckinley while younger daughter Raven looks at a book.

instrumental in bringing speech pathology into the continuum of services offered to WMFC preschoolers. Elaine implemented a full-day preschool program and an extended/summer preschool option for eighteen lucky pre-kindergarten students. She acted as Early Childhood Specialist for WMFC, NMFC and Salvation Army preschool programs and has been very involved with the Midland Early Childhood Consortium. Most recently Elaine acted on the committee to choose one curriculum to be used across the board in all Midland County, Michigan School Readiness Preschool Programs (of which WMFC is one).

Elaine always showed a great dedication to the children in her care. If you know someone who attended one of Mrs. Fabinski's classes or any other WMFC preschool class please let them know about the upcoming reunion.



We'll miss you Mrs. Fabinski

As many of her students would say. We will miss you "Mrs. <u>Babinski!</u>" We wish you the best of fortune and grand adventures.

WMFC RECEIVES AFTER SCHOOL EXPANSION GRANT

WMFC recently received a grant from the Department of Human Services. This grant will support an increase in programming from four to five days per week. It will support: a September rather than October start date, programming during winter and spring breaks and will allow the program to end in May rather than April. Another exciting benefit to this grant is that it provides for a Tutoring Coordinator to work with the schools, program participants and their parents to ensure academic success among our program participants.

Thank you Deloitte!

Most people acknowledge there is value in having a positive impact on a community. The greatest testament of this comes from the recipient of such positive impact. WMFC was a beneficiary of such kindhearted actions. A great big WMFC THANK YOU to twenty-six individuals from the local Deloitte offices. Their efforts were a great enhancement to the smooth beginning of the 2005 Summer Program.

Armed with hammers, shovels, saws and sponges, donned in blue "Impact Day" tee shirts: these ambitious folks set to work. Their goal was to have enough meaningful work to keep everyone busy. They wanted to accomplish much to really make an impact! Always willing to accommodate such a request, WMFC staff members prepared a long list of projects for the volunteers! They arrived before 9:00 a.m. divided into four workgroups and worked until nearly 5:00 p.m., with only a brief lunch break to sustain them.

Many of their projects had a direct impact on preparation for Summer Program They positioned straw bales to act as walls for our outdoor inline hockey rink. In the process this group had an interesting encounter with a lizard something they *didn't* sign up for, they dug postholes, hung fencing and constructed benches and picnic tables (used daily by hungry Summer Program participants). They weeded, cleared, assembled and washed. In all, ten MAJOR projects were accomplished at the center.

Maintenance Director, Jeff Myers said of the group" They polished off about four days of work for us in just one day! They were such a pleasure to work with, they were happy to tackle everything we brought their way." Several other staff members commented on the group's enthusiasm. Gail Crosby, Director of Programs commented that the weather was hot and yet it did not seem to slow them down at all. "They were highly motivated and excited to be at the Center working. They are a great group of community minded individuals."

As a rule, non-profit organizations have limited financial and human resources. This fact can limit their ability such that only the essential



Deloitte staff members make a difference at WMFC.

tasks are accomplished. When outside groups become involved the way Deliotte did at WMFC, it means the difference between getting projects accomplished and having them set aside indefinitely. Thanks to the Deloitte group for accomplishing so many important projects. They completed projects that would have been set aside without their help: imagine lunch without picnic tables or a roller hockey game in which one person's job is to chase the puck back into the rink! Thanks much for contributing to our community!

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*Each staff member is listed only once although many serve multiple roles at the center.