



NOTEABLES

ABLE Families

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National journal calls ABLE program “an inspired literacy effort”!



Award-winning children’s author Anna Smucker autographs a book for an ABLE Families Afterschool student during her visit to the program.

Within weeks of its introduction, ABLE Families’ new Authors Afterschool program was recognized by *The Nonprofit Quarterly* as “an inspired literacy effort.” The comment came in the journal’s “Nonprofit Newswire.”

Through Authors Afterschool, ABLE students are being exposed to some high-quality children’s literature *and* the people who write it.

On March 25, students met Anna Smucker, award-winning author of *No Star Nights*, *Golden Delicious*, and *The Life of St. Brigid*.

On April 29, Sarah Sullivan visited the program. Sullivan is the author of *Root Beer and Banana*, *Once Upon a Baby Brother*, and *Dear Baby*.

On May 6, the program hosted

Marc Harshman, author of *Rocks in My Pockets*, *A Little Excitement*, and other books.

Days in advance of each visit, every student of the Afterschool program received his or her own copy of a book by the author. The children read it together, discussed it, and participated in discussions and creative activities related to the book. The snacks they ate that week were also based on each book’s story.

The process culminated with each author’s visit. Smucker, Sullivan, and Harshman talked to students about the joys of reading and writing, explained how they get ideas and write a book, and led them in a mini writing workshop.

Continued on page 3.

Summer Camp 2010 schedule announced

ABLE Families has announced the schedule for its 2010 Summer Camp Season. The following camps will be available at no cost to any child of the Kermit area.

CSI Camp (June 21-25): An engaging, hands-on introduction to forensic science.

Music Camp (June 28-July 2): Beginner and intermediate lessons in both guitar and dulcimer.

Chef Camp (July 12-16): Kids learn to cook in ABLE Families’ kitchen classroom.

Ecology Camp (July 19-23): A week of fascination and fun at the nearby

Web of Life Ecology Center.

Books Camp (July 26-30): Diving into some wonderful books for kids, with some related activities and surprise gifts.

Swim Camp (August 9-13): A week of swimming lessons, water safety, first aid training, and lots of fun at Williamson Municipal Pool.

Uniquely Me! (June 14-July 2): A special camp experience for teen girls, featuring work with a personal trainer and important life skills development.

For more information, visit our blog at <http://ablefamilies.wordpress.com>.

ABLE nutrition ed. program replicated in Nashville

ABLE Families’ nutrition education program, *Supper in a Sack*, is now being replicated at six different community centers in Nashville, Tennessee.

“ABLE Families’ impact extends far beyond Kermit,” said Barbara Clinton, Director of Vanderbilt University’s Center for Health Services, when she reported this to us.

We’re proud that this remarkable ABLE Families program now serves as a model for other community programs.

A Note from the Director



I read a lot of material from colleagues who do jobs similar to my own — managing high-quality programs at nonprofits while raising money to keep them going. A common frustration is being uncomfortable asking people for money to support what they're doing.

I have to confess to you, I don't mind it. Oh, it was a little uncomfortable at first, when I started in this position. But it didn't take long to realize that the really good things that happen around here *wouldn't happen* without the financial support we receive. And when I saw that, asking people to help make it happen became easy.

Put yourself in my place for moment. Just in *the last couple of days*:

— I've shaken the hand of a middle-aged man who earned his GED, and who will now have new employment opportunities opened up to him, thanks to tutoring he received here.

— I have been moved to hear some of our afterschool students play Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* on the harp, thanks to lessons they received here.

— I've watched a significant au-

thor of children's literature talk with students in this low-literacy region about the joys of reading and writing.

— I've welcomed an official from our county's health office who came to train our in-home family educators, to raise their understanding of some crucial health issues that face local families.

— I've received a letter from a long-time advocate for the poor, telling me that when she's asked by people where they should send their charitable donations to make sure they really make an impact for poor people in West Virginia, her answer is "ABLE Families."

So no, I don't mind asking for money to support the work we do. Living here, I know it's work that *must be done* by someone, and I'm proud to be involved in doing it.

That's why my wife and I are personal financial supporters of ABLE Families. We can't give a lot, but we do what we can. That's all I'd ask of anyone else.

To those of you who do, on behalf of the guy who just earned his GED, those kids who played Beethoven, the parents who get our help in raising healthy kids, and all the other people we serve: *Thank you.*

Barry

ABLE Families receives \$15,000 McDonough grant

ABLE Families has been awarded a grant of \$15,000 from the Bernard McDonough Foundation. The money was awarded for the support of our Afterschool program.

These funds will be used to continue providing the enriching experiences and activities that we build into the two hours a day we spend with about 25 local kids after school. That means more professional development for our Afterschool staff, more books and literacy activities, more supplies and resources for homework help and art projects, more quality equipment for outdoor activities, more opportunities to continue and develop programs like our new Authors Afterschool project, and salaries to maintain excellent staff to serve our kids.

ABLE Families has a history of collaboration with the McDonough Foundation, which supports many valuable projects in this region. We welcome the opportunity to continue this fruitful relationship, and we're honored by their trust in our work.

Send Us Your Email Address

In an effort to communicate more effectively, ABLE Families is asking all those interested in its work to send their email addresses. Eventually, we'd like to be able to send all newsletters out via email, saving trees and expense, but it will take time to get to that point.

Send your email address to Barry at bhudock@ablefamilies.org.

ABLE Events

Left: A record number of children participated in ABLE Families annual MIHOW Easter Egg Hunt, held at Kermit Park March 27.

Right: Fourteen students from Sr. Louis University spent their spring breaks with ABLE Families, doing service work in the Kermit area. Here one SLU student helps present a literacy activity based on Dr. Seuss characters to children at a local Head Start program.



Briefly

New Peterworth Scholarship Fund Announced by ABLE

Our Board of Directors has announced the creation of the **Sr. Janet Peterworth Scholarship Fund**. The fund will offer financial support to Kermit area residents who are seeking a college education. All of the initial money in the fund account was donated personally by members of the agency's board. The first winner of Peterworth Scholarship funds will be announced by fall 2010.

ABLE Clients Move Toward GEDs

Congratulations to Charlie Spaulding, who received his General Equivalency Diploma (GED) on April 29, after tutoring from ABLE's adult education coordinator Molly Lueken. More than a dozen local adults are currently preparing to take their GED exam under Molly's guidance. Molly is a full-time volunteer who comes to us through the Christian Appalachian Project.

Dinner at the Governor's Mansion

On March 2, ABLE Executive Director Barry Hudock attended a special dinner at the WV Governor's Mansion in Charleston. Speakers at the dinner addressed the needs of WV children and learned about important efforts being made by nonprofit agencies in the state to confront these needs.

ABLE's YouTube Video

Visit ABLE Families' YouTube channel to view our newest online video. You can view it at <http://www.youtube.com/user/ablefamilies>.

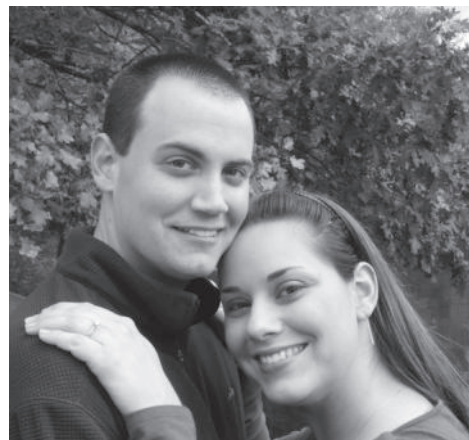
Couple's wedding becomes a moment to give to others

When Regina Haggenjos and Bryan Brown were married in December 2009, they turned a day that would traditionally be focused exclusively on themselves into an opportunity to help others. The children and families served by ABLE Families became the beneficiaries of their generosity.

Regina and Brian decided to skip some of the expenses that are traditionally associated with a wedding, and to send the money they would have spent to two charitable causes — one that's important to her and one that's important to him. Regina chose ABLE Families, in honor of her grandmother Virginia Haggenjos, who passed away in May 2009.

The couple sent a note to ABLE Families in February explaining their decision and included a generous check.

ABLE Families was a favorite cause of Regina's grandmother Virginia and her surviving husband, George. For many years, George and Virginia traveled with friends from Columbia City, Ohio, to



the ABLE site in Kermit, to volunteer their time. ABLE Families founding director Sr Janet Peterworth spoke at Virginia's funeral mass last year.

Because their son Donald and his wife Sharon (Regina's parents) have also offered financial gifts to the agency, ABLE Families is proud to say that there are now *three generations of supporters* among the Haggenjos family!

Congratulations to Regina and Bryan on their marriage!

Authors Afterschool, from p. 1

ABLE Families' Authors Afterschool program is funded by a grants from the West Virginia Humanities Council, the McDonough Foundation, and the personal donations of supporters.

Mingo County's literacy rate is one of the lowest of all counties in the state. The National Institute for Literacy has reported that nearly 30 percent of residents here have difficulty reading beyond a fourth grade level. Only two other counties in the state have lower literacy rates.

More information, lots of photos, and comments from the authors themselves can be found at the ABLE Families blog, <http://ablefamilies.wordpress.com>.



On February 19, 2010, ABLE Families celebrated its fifteenth anniversary of serving people living in poverty in Mingo County. The celebration included the presentation of a medal to founding director Sr. Janet Peterworth, from WV Governor Joe Manchin III. The medal honored St. Janet for her significant contributions to life in the great state of West Virginia. Above, Executive Director Barry Hudock presents the medal to Sr. Janet and reads the accompanying citation from Governor.

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New ABLE Families program gets national notice! See page 1.



ABLE Families Afterschool student Kelli plays the dulcimer.

The **ABLE Families blog** provides agency news and events, as well as new information about literacy, maternal and infant health, poverty and justice in Mingo County, and more. Visit

www.ablefamilies.wordpress.com

Updated several times a week!



Dulcimer Lessons Teach Music and More

The skills and desire of seven local students have begun to outgrow the weekly dulcimer lessons they receive at ABLE Families afterschool program. Tutor Heidi Mueller now allows those seven students to take a dulcimer home with them, so that they can practice in the evenings and on weekends. She is already witnessing the results of their increased practice.

Heidi, an award-winning folk songwriter and performer, comes to ABLE Families Afterschool from Charleston each week, thanks to a grant from The Clay Center.

“One of my greatest joys is to show up on Wednesday and the kids come in and play me a song. They are always so attentive, bright, and enthusiastic,” Heidi said recently.

The scope and purpose of Heidi’s lessons extend beyond simply teaching the children to play the dulcimer. She also educates them on the instrument’s historical and cultural significance here in West Virginia.

“Not only is the dulcimer easier to start out playing than the guitar, violin, or piano, but it’s also an important part of West Virginia’s heritage that is sadly forgotten by many people,” she said.

Another reason that makes these weekly lessons important is studies showing that children who learn music at an early age perform better at academics than many of their peers. “Essentially, learning an instrument as a child helps to hardwire the brain for learning other subjects,” Heidi explained.

Of course, we adults greatly enjoy that students are learning music, culture, and history through the dulcimer lessons. However, for the children, the greatest benefit of Muller’s weekly visit is the fun. One of our students remarked, “I really like Miss Heidi’s lessons, because I get to play music with my best friend. We’re learning the dulcimer together.”