

# Career Choices & Challenges

A News Sheet about Montana Early Care and Education Career Development

March 2008

## Spotlight on Sara Maria Silva - Bozeman, Montana

Sara had many experiences in child care facilities when she was a child. When her family came to America from Portugal she had the opportunity to attend a Montessori preschool program. She says she had never been in a program where she felt so respected, capable and empowered. "I had the freedom to pick any activity I wanted to do and they were real activities: washing dishes, making soap suds, the alphabet box...I was fascinated by the lessons (as they are called in Montessori) and the way we were treated by the teachers - with respect and as worthwhile individuals."

Sara went on to complete her High School Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED). She did some soul-searching and enrolled in the Pan-American Montessori Teacher Training classes and internship. After graduating and receiving her Montessori teacher certificate in 2002, Sara started teaching at a Montessori School in Bozeman. "Even as I received my training as a 3-6 Montessori teacher I was curious about the 0-3 Montessori program and searched for a course that focused on this age group. I felt such a tenderness towards the little ones and wondered how do we scaffold their environment and experiences to assist them in their development?"

Sara found the Birth - Three Montessori training, completed that in 2005, and eventually became the lead teacher for the toddlers at Middle Creek Montessori School. After her program became licensed, she was introduced to Child Care Connections (CCC) in Bozeman, and this put her in touch with another world - the world of child care and those who move in it. She was still hungry for more information so she could serve the child even better. Sara went on to complete the sixty hour Infant Toddler Caregiver course offered at CCC in 2007 for which she received Infant Toddler Merit Pay. Through that course, she learned about the Early Childhood Education Core courses through the University of Montana Western where she is now in her second semester.

In her own words: "Throughout my educational path I have had but one guiding light - the child. My Montessori training has fostered such a reverence for the child and his/her great work that I feel a strong need to learn all I can so I can be of greater assistance to the child. To that end I have created a Montessori

classroom that is infused with all I have learned in my classes and courses. Our school, Middle Creek Montessori, is fully state licensed in all the classrooms (except for the elementary). Children at our school have also had the opportunity to attend our program with scholarship assistance from Child Care Connections.

I love the uniqueness of each child. I love watching them take their first tentative but sure steps towards independence, autonomy and individuality. I love listening to them as they try to make sense of the world. I love the way their hearts are so tender and open to us. Their trust in us, and their love for us, is such an awe-inspiring responsibility. I also love to create the environment and materials that assist the children in their great work - my task is such a unique gift." -LH

### Adult Learning is On the Way...

Don't miss this year's opportunities to engage in some of the best training available for trainers and mentors! This popular training will help you hone your training and technical assistance, teach learning skills or review and inspire you to enhance your training approaches. The cost of each session is \$25.00. Susan Harper-Whalen and Sandra Morris of Child Care plus+ at the University of Montana are the facilitators and model best practices in adult learning throughout each session.

**Adult Learning III:** April 8, 2008 - Missoula (no prerequisite to register for this session.)

**Adult Learning I and II:** July 31 and August 1, 2008 - Bozeman. You must complete Adult Learning I to register for Adult Learning II.

All sessions are approved for six hours of training and run from 9:00 - 4:30 each day with a one and half hour lunch break on your own. A continental breakfast beginning at 8:30 am and afternoon snacks and beverages will be available each day.

Registration is available by calling the Early Childhood Project (ECP) at 1-800-213-6310 or 406-994-4746 or by emailing us at [ecp@montana.edu](mailto:ecp@montana.edu) to request to have the materials emailed to you.

## Renew, Renew... A Benefit to You!

Once you have been placed on the Montana Practitioner Registry—STAY ON! By renewing every year, you remain eligible for a wide variety of Best Beginnings awards, grants and stipends. This is Montana's unique way of helping you do the best job you can for the children and families you serve in your early care and education programs. You must have a current Registry certificate to apply for many of these great opportunities, so keep it current by completing your required training hours each year — 23 hours for people working in licensed or registered programs or 15 hours, if not. The Pre-Professional Level requires eight hours of annual training.

Look at it this way: for \$10 each year you could be eligible for thousands of dollars in program improvement funds, awards to help you pay the cost of college or recognize your commitment to training!

There will be a surprise gift for all 2008 first time renewals to The Registry . . . we know who you are!

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### Contact the ECP

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## Win a Trip to A Conference!

We will be drawing for 2008 Winners on April Fool's Day . . . there will be one person drawn for a state conference and one for a national conference from our pool of active participants on The Practitioner Registry. Each of those winners may choose a colleague who is also active on The Registry to join them on an all expenses paid trip to the conference of their choosing this year. A list of potential conferences is available from the ECP. Expenses will include travel costs, lodging, meals and registration. The Career Development Advisory Board that guides the ECP's work is responsible for this exciting professional development incentive, and we particularly thank board member Rita LaMiaux from Butte for this idea. The funds to pay for this incentive come from our account that holds both initial and renewal Registry fees—it is coming back to you! *We will contact you by phone if you are a winner!*

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### Do You Have Diamonds?

Take a look at your Montana Registry Certificate—did you ever wonder what the diamonds signify that appear under your name? Each diamond represents each year you have remained consistently active on The Registry. In 2008, some professionals will receive their *NINTH* diamond for renewing each year since it all began! We are exploring incentive packages with our Advisory Board that will grant monetary rewards to people based upon their number of consecutive Registry renewals and also for moving to a new level. *Stay tuned.*

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### New Registry Enrollment Coming!

The Early Childhood Project has been working to have our computer system rebuilt and upgraded to increase security, eliminate the need for social security numbers and to allow for more web-based capabilities. It has taken much longer than anticipated due to turnover with the programmers. However, we have stayed the course and are hopeful to have it tested and launched by Fall 2008. In line with national trends, we will be collecting additional information so we can share this important data with policy makers at the state and national levels. Many other states are doing the same type of work to advocate for a well-trained workforce to improve the quality of child care in America through linkages to professional development. Montana will continue to play a lead role in this process!

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### Job Board

For those of you who are not place bound and interested in pursuing early childhood teaching elsewhere in the country some exciting job opportunities are coming across our emails lately! Both Nike (headquartered in Portland, Oregon) and Bright Horizons (many locations) are recruiting for teachers recently. Visit our website to see what's out there . . . beyond our Montana horizons.

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### A Resource for You

Child Care Information Exchange has a free daily e-newsletter that is a great way to keep current in the field and attuned to The Big Picture. To subscribe to ExchangeEveryDay, go to [www.ccie.com/eed](http://www.ccie.com/eed).



Montana Early Childhood Project

