

Career Choices & Challenges

A News Sheet about Montana Early Care and Education Career Development

October 2007

Spotlight on Rita Shope in St. Regis, Montana

“Going back to school was the best thing that ever happened to me! I wish I had known all the child development information when my son was little!”

These are the enthusiastic words from Rita Shope, the 2007 Montana Child Development Specialist Apprentice of the Year. She received her University of Montana Western, Early Childhood Certificate after completing 30 credits in early childhood education and is continuing on to complete her associate degree and eventually her bachelor's. Rita has a “thirst for knowledge” as she describes it and this is evident in her voice as she talks about her coursework. Her former employer was the first person to encourage her to go to college.

When the Superintendent of the St. Regis School District and a School Board Trustee approached her about opening a child care/preschool there, she jumped at the chance. Her family child care group home serves twelve families with children ages one to four years old. Her program is located in a house that is owned by the school district across from the high school. Rita has utilized Merit Pay and received 50 hours of approved training beyond her college courses one year and also received a Mini-Grant her first year in business. She is hoping to write for a larger Provider Grant next year!

Rita is a go-getter in her community and participated in the Governor's School Readiness Summit in June of 2006 in Helena and is the lead for her local team. Her biggest challenge is helping others understand how important the early years in child care and preschool are for all future development.

She is currently working to start McGruff Safe Houses in St. Regis and also worked with the sheriff to sponsor a Sexual Offender Awareness Night. When one of her families missed the eligibility requirements for the Best Beginnings Scholarship Program by \$2.00, Rita started her own scholarship fund through local fundraising activities to help the family pay the cost of their preschool bills.

Her biggest love is being with the children, but specifically she loves writing down children's dictated stories and typing them up to share with parents. What a terrific early literacy activity and fun way to promote a child's self-esteem.

Congratulations to Rita for her professional achievements in early childhood and her dedication to the families in her community! *LH*

Montana Infant-Toddler Guidelines

The Early Childhood Project will be coordinating the development of Infant Toddler Guidelines for Montana during the upcoming year. We hope most of you are familiar with the Early Learning Guidelines (ELG's) for three – five year olds that were published in 2004. They are being used in many creative ways around the state to enhance learning for young children. Those guidelines seem to be helping practitioners understand how content in all curriculum areas applies to preschool age children.

The Fun Family Activities companion piece is packed full of practical, easy ideas to help parents and guardians use the guidelines at home to promote early learning.

We are enthused about the wide-spread interest in guidelines for babies and toddlers! We will keep you posted as we begin to discuss a process for development.

To order ELG's for 3-5 year olds, call 406.444.1400

Save the Date: April 8, 2008

Adult Learning III, is designed for people who offer technical assistance to early care and education practitioners. It will be held in Missoula on Tuesday, April 8th from 8:30 - 4:30.

Save the Date: August 7-8, 2008

Adult Learning I and II, is tentatively scheduled for August 7th and 8th in Bozeman. You must have completed Adult Learning I to register for Adult Learning II. Each of these six hour sessions are designed for people interested in providing training for early care and education practitioners.

If you would like more information on the Adult Learning classes please contact the ECP.

Enrollment is limited to thirty participants for each session, so register early when you receive your registration information that will be emailed out to everyone on The Trainer Directory. If you would like to be included on the trainer listserv, download the Trainer Directory application at the ECP website, update your resume and send it all to the ECP. This is the primary method we use to notify trainers of these opportunities in Montana.

Contact the ECP

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You Could Be A Big Winner!

In 2008 the Early Childhood Project will be awarding all expense paid trips to a state and national early childhood conference of the winners' choosing. ***The only requirement to be entered into the drawing is to be active on The Montana Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry.*** The Career Development Advisory Board created this incentive option for Registry participants at their May 2007 meeting.

Two names will be drawn for a state conference and a national conference. Those lucky winners will each be able to choose another colleague in the field to be their travelling companion to the conference, who also must be active on The Registry. Our award will cover travel costs, lodging, meals, and conference registration fees.

These awards will be paid out of the fund that has accrued from Registry fees. . . it is time to reward those of you who have joined The Registry to be counted in your field. You are professionals making critical contributions to the health and well-being of Montana communities through your programs for young children and families.

We are always exploring ways to promote The Registry in Montana for early childhood professionals. If you are active on The Registry, you will be included in important information about the early childhood workforce in the United States. None of your personal information is used, of course, but the Early Childhood Project pools the data we have about experience, education and training and shares it with our other state partners. This data will be used to inform policymakers. We can never expect to see increases in our wages and status as professionals until we are willing to participate in research about who we are and what we do.

If we want to see change in our field, we must be part of the solution! This is one way to inform others, from our own local partners and business leaders to our state legislators, governor, and national policy makers about who we are in the lives of children! Stand up and be counted...**APPLY TODAY TO THE PRACTITIONER REGISTRY!**



Montana Early Childhood Project

