



Family Literacy Academy at Lake Wales

Newsletter

**March
2023**

Executive Director's Comments

During February and March adults and children worked hard with their noses to the grindstone as the end of the school year started to raise its head. New students enrolled in daytime and nighttime GED and ESOL classes and joined the pursuit of their academic and life goals. As ESOL students gain sufficient grasp of English, they tend to move on as others seeking help in securing better ability to comprehend and use English fill in; with GED, most often, students leave because they pass their final GED test, such as Marissa Brown, our third student this year to obtain a high school diploma (except she did not leave us, we hired her to tutor and assist the instructors). And our students' education doesn't stop with their departure from the Academy, as we are once again reminded by the news that past Academy graduate Karina Bautista has completed her two-year college degree as Valedictorian of her class with perfect attendance - an inspiration to all to "Keep At It."

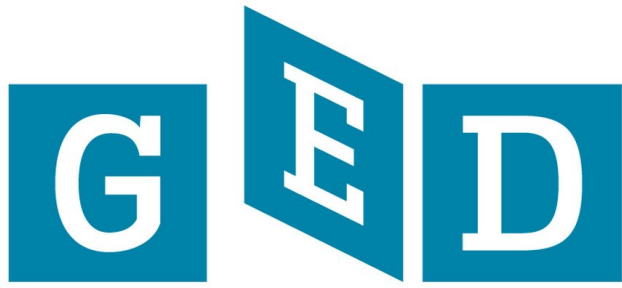
Our preschool continues to encourage our preschoolers to enjoy their new learning experiences while becoming adapted to working with others. Please

see the report on the preschool and the Mommy and Me programs.

While instruction continues, the Academy is active in many community events. Once again, the Academy operated the Children's Tent at the annual Lake Wales Arts Festival, providing arts related books and activities to the children of Festival attendees. The Academy assisted the County Library System and other agency providers around Polk in an outreach effort to inform the public of available services. In addition, the Academy set up a community task force to explore childhood brain development and recommend best practices to implement it - an in-depth study based on the film, "No Small Matter," in which we are seeking community-wide support.

Of great community interest, education leader, former Lake Wales Principal Donna Dunson has been elected unanimously to the Academy's Board of Directors. We look forward to her broad knowledge of Lake Wales education needs and her vast and creative experience in contributing major improvements as the board continues to meet education challenges for residents of the community.

Now, let's get started with the details of February and March Academy activities...



MARISSA BROWN GAINS HER HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

What a great way to celebrate the start of spring! Marissa Brown passed her final test (Math) to obtain her GED. She is the third student this academic year to do so and the 122nd overall.

Marissa enrolled in the Academy last September with her two sons. With regular attendance, the boys made great progress in preschool while Marissa was able to gain her high school diploma through conscientious study. While she contemplates her next education steps, we have hired Marissa to tutor her former remaining classmates in Math, enabling her boys to continue preparing for school and lifelong learning and reading.

Congratulations to the Brown family !

ALL VETERANS CENTER HELPS FEED OUR FAMILIES



After hearing about our class discussion related to the impact of food desert and increased food costs on the nutrition needs of our families, the All Veterans Center in Lake Wales sprang into action and began a weekly supply of some 25 bags of basic food items for adults and children. The selection varies from week to week depending on what shipments the Center receives. For example, a drug store chain sent a variety of non-expired items, including food and over-the-counter items. The Academy supplements the bags with fruits and vegetables provided by other community generosity. Great credit goes to the All Veterans Center for helping the Academy meet some other needs our students face as they pursue their education.

 A banner for the All Veterans Center, Inc. featuring an American flag at the top, followed by the official seals of the United States Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard. Below the seals, the text reads: "All Veterans Center, Inc. *Helping Heroes Heal!*". A red ribbon banner contains the text: "The AVC is dedicated to serving veterans and their families. With community partners, we provide support for mental health, physical health, housing, employment, nutrition, wellness, and more." At the bottom right is a silhouette of a soldier saluting, with the text "Veterans helping veterans" and the phone numbers "(863) 528-0655, (863) 241-9625".



From our indomitable leader of the Academy's Preschool, Robin Jolley, comes the following report:

"UP, UP, and AWAY! We are flying high in our childcare program. The students have discovered their wings and we are thrilled to see the growth that is occurring in our little ones.

Books are becoming some of our favorite classroom items. Students have chosen classroom favorites and we have lost count of how many times we have read them. We often see a student reading by themselves or with one of their friends. They are choosing to spend time having us read to them. Some of the students are now wanting to read the stories to us. We are beyond excited when this happens.

We have started a new unit on transportation and our newest center is the Airport. The students are having so much fun assuming the roles of pilot, flight attendant, security personnel, ticketing personnel, and "of course" passengers.

Along with airflight practice, we will be reading books, working on activities, and learning about other forms of transportation that we see or use on a daily basis.

Our teachers work hard to make the students feel they are individually important to each of us. We want them to know that they are loved and that we are excited to see them every day that they walk into our classroom. Seeing the way that they are responding to this shows that they know this is all true.

We have watched the children mature and learn to play with each other, share with each other, show concern when one of their friends doesn't come to class that day, and hug to welcome their friends when they do walk in the door.

Parents will share how their child is excited about coming to class and we appreciate it when they will let us know of areas where we can support behaviors and skills that they are trying to work on at home. We assure them that we want to support them in these areas.

There is a quote that says, "It takes a village to raise a child." But, there is also a quote that says, "If it takes a village to raise a child, then it also takes a village to support the parents." We strive to help our parents through our daily interactions with them and our continuing parenting classes. Our goal is to work together to help prepare their child for today and their future. The village we have created is one of family and we love our family."



"MOMMY AND ME" PROGRAM A HIT WITH PARENTS AND CHILDREN

The Lake Wales Arts Center has partnered with Family Literacy Academy at Mary Campbell Center to bring literacy and art to parents and pre-k children in the program. It was designed by children's author and artist Toni Withaneye. Fred R. Barnard said it best, "A picture is worth a thousand words." In this unique program art and literacy are combined to help children retain and reinforce the topic they are learning. When children listen to a story and create art it enhances the storytelling. This builds the foundation for future creative writing, print awareness, visual literacy, and verbal creativity.

During the program parent and child enjoy music, movement, and art activities weekly. The music is combined with props, a picture book is read and finally the mixed media art activity. All the projects, stories and music are based on a monthly theme. The props include parachute, sticks and scarves and encourage

sharing. The art includes drawing, painting, sculpture, and STEAM projects. After the activities families receive the featured book. Many of the parents have said "they are using things learned at home".



Art is an amazing tool to reach, teach, enrich, and learn!

Note:

Thank you, Toni and the Arts Center for bringing to our families a new and exciting way

to combine the Arts with our more traditional curriculum to produce a thoroughly joyful way for children and parents to learn together.



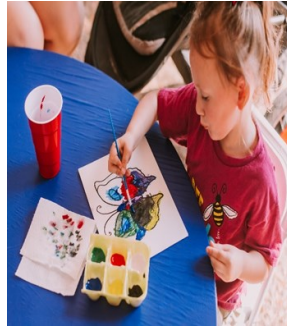
FAMILY LITERACY AT THE LAKE WALES ARTS FESTIVAL

This year's Lake Wales Arts Festival was held at Lake Wales on a warm and sunny weekend, February 25 and 26.

Once again, the Academy served as host of the Arts Festival's Childrens' Tent. This year's focus was butterflies, and almost 200 children were given the opportunity to "color" butterfly pictures with colored pencils or paint, and leave the tent with a book - oh, yes, and their own 3-D plastic butterfly attached to their shoulder.

The helpers at the tent were Academy staff, volunteers, Board members and students from Lake Wales High School earning community credit hours.

It was a busy and well received event - wonderful that the children of attendees had their own part of the Festival, and a fun learning activity.



county residents information on available services to meet their needs and to offer agencies the opportunity to meet new prospects. The program is a service of the county libraries.

FAMILY LITERACY COMMUNITY TASK FORCE FOCUSES ON BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

The Family Literacy Academy has established a task force on the brain development of children and how to encourage best practices to foster optimum mental growth, as discussed in the film, "NO SMALL MATTER." We need the community to be part of the task force's efforts to be truly effective in helping existing efforts to continue to improve early childhood development. Increasing community-wide awareness on the importance of understanding how the brain develops from birth to 5 years old was the primary focus. In order to accomplish this the task force raised the importance of approaching the various interested groups and markets in the community (parents, teachers, businesses, churches).

The task forces' organizational meeting was held at the offices of Webber University's Vice President Nelson Marquez, Task Force head, on March 28.

A follow-up meeting is scheduled for late April to discuss a strategy for initial community meetings and a review of informational media material to present, in addition to "NO SMALL Matter."

Initial members of the Task Force are:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ◇ Nelson Marquez | Vice President,
Webber University |
| ◇ Wayne Rodolfich | Superintendent, LW
Charter Schools |
| ◇ Lori Cunningham | Chair, Polk County
School Board |
| ◇ Tom McCance | Community Member |
| ◇ Kathy Manry Smith | Community Member |
| ◇ Sheila Chambers | Early Learning
Coalition |

(Dr. Marquez, Dr. Rodolfich, Mr. McCance, and Mrs. Smith are all members of the Academy's Board)

FAMILY LITERACY AT COUNTY EVENT TO INTRODUCE HELP FOR RESIDENTS

In March, the Lake Wales Library served as the first site to host an all-county agency outreach to provide

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DONNA DUNSON JOINS BOARD

Boy, are we ever fortunate! Our longtime friend and supporter, Donna Dunson, has joined the Academy's strong, knowledgeable, community-minded creative, and diverse Board of Directors. As you know, Lake Wales has greatly benefitted from Donna's arrival in the early 2000's to help with the implementation of Lake Wales Charter Schools, first at Polk Avenue Elementary, then Bok Academy Middle, and finally at the Lake Wales High School. She was principal at all three, but it was at the High School that she made the most remarkable difference - increasing school spirit, greatly increasing the focus on academics and her students' ability to succeed, introducing an effective IB program to the curriculum and raising the graduation rate significantly. The Academy looks forward to adding her creativity, empathy and knowledge to its efforts to improve the lives of its students through education.

That's all for now. Remember to contact us for comments, suggestions and your bags of aluminum cans to help purchase our students' gas and food cards. Read our next issue at the end of April. And thank you for your continuing support.

By the way, our long-time supporter Aunt Martha is approaching her 98th birthday !! Drop her a note at sfranz53@yahoo.com.

Our Sponsors are



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as well as:

- ♦ American Association of University Women/Lake Wales
- ♦ Kiwanis Club of Lake Wales
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and several generous individuals

*The Family Literacy Academy at Lake Wales is a
501(c)(3) charitable organization*

If you wish to help us with
volunteer or financial
support, please call :

(863) 604- 8012

www.flalw.org

See our new video on Facebook:
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