

the Sprout

News from Forty Carrots Family Center

SPRING 2012

Education & Support PIP Library Programs Help Parents Help Themselves & Each Other

For Zubeida and Robert Remes, parenting their first child was somewhat of a breeze. Their son Alsherik, now 10, was one of those easy babies other parents envy. He was a happy, mellow child who hardly ever cried, always slept through the night and practically potty trained himself by age 2.

Then came daughter, Kaitlin. "I thought I learned everything I needed to know with the first one, but she was totally different," Zubeida recalled with a laugh. "She was fussy, clingy, and much more demanding. She was a fitful sleeper and would get up every two hours on the dot."

By the time Kaitlin was 2, the Venice mom had scoured the area for mom & tot gatherings, places where she could take Kaitlin and connect with other moms going through similar experiences.

She found the perfect spot at the Venice library, when she happened upon a Forty Carrots *Partners In Play* (PIP) class. She was captivated not only by the play-based learning taking place between the parents and their children, but also the parenting advice and tips exchanged by the participants and Forty Carrots' facilitators.

"In the Forty Carrots group, there was a lot of teaching going on," she said. "The facilitators were helping parents better understand the challenging situations we were finding ourselves in ... learning



what was normal for that particular age and stage of development.

"Not only did I get to meet other moms and play with my child, they also taught me about developmental milestones and how to manage difficult behaviors with positive discipline.

"And it was free ... you can't beat that!"



Zubeida and 3-1/2-year-old Kaitlin at a recent PIP class at the Jacaranda Library

Strengthening Families

The *Partners In Play* classes at the library are part of Forty Carrots *On Wheels* Community Outreach Parenting Program. For more than a decade, Forty Carrots facilitators have been bringing their mobile early childhood classroom to all eight Sarasota County libraries, reaching families who otherwise might not have the resources to access such services.

The classes are free, supported by grants, donations and Forty Carrots' own fund raising. Research shows empowering parents with skills, information and support strengthens the parent-child relationship, reduces the isolation that some parents

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Forty Carrots Founding Mother Steps Aside

It's often said that when one door closes, a window of opportunity opens. That's the situation unfolding as Forty Carrots Family Center bids adieu to Executive Director Betsy Kane-Hartnett this May.

After nearly 20 years at the helm of this organization she gave birth to, Betsy is stepping aside and handing it over to a new generation of leaders.

"It's never easy letting go of your baby, but every bone in my body is saying now is the time," said Betsy. "Everything I know how to give, I have given – my heart, my soul.

"Forty Carrots has an exceptional staff, a visionary and dedicated board and advisory council and the support of the community we serve. Together, they are ready, willing and able to take this place we all love to a new level."

Betsy and former co-executive director Diane Weiss founded the organization in 1993. After Diane stepped down in 2009, Betsy and the Board of Trustees began discussing and preparing for the transition that would follow her eventual retirement. Despite a challenging economy, Forty Carrots flourished under Betsy's leadership the



past few years, enhancing its preschool and parenting center services while wrapping up a \$1.35 million capital campaign that secured the center's home on Tuttle Avenue for years to come.

"Without a doubt, we've got some big shoes to fill... Betsy has been the life and soul of this organization," said Rodney Linford, chairman of Forty Carrots' Board of Trustees. "But thanks to her leadership and sound stewardship, we've never been in a better position to embrace the

Retirement — continued on page 2

Math in Motion

Mathematicians and musicians have long recognized the links between their disciplines, yet the two are often taught separately in early childhood classrooms, or in the case of early math, sometimes not at all.

At Forty Carrots Family Center, however, preschool teachers and parenting educators are putting "Math in Motion" – using children's love of music and dance to foster logic, mathematics, language and literacy.

"The opportunities to integrate math and movement are countless," said Christina Rodrigues, Parenting Program Director at Forty Carrots. "Whether we are counting musical beats, using our bodies to form lines and circles or repeating patterns in movement, we are transforming every day experiences into math reasoning – and we are doing it in a way that comes naturally to children."

Across the country, lawmakers, educators, and business leaders are working together to strengthen Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education, after U.S.

Math in Motion — continued on page 3



Dear Friends

At the time of this writing, I am preparing myself (or at least trying to) for my last few months as Forty Carrots Family Center's executive director. After 19 years in the role, to say I have big feelings about stepping down is an understatement!

I will miss working with my team – the most dedicated, talented and spirited group of women I have ever met.

I will miss knowing that our work is making the world a better place, day after day.

I will miss being thought of as a rock star, at least by eighty-some-odd children.

And I will miss being a teacher after an always-fulfilling 37-year career.

Big feelings aside, I know in my heart and mind that the time is right. Forty Carrots is on solid ground thanks to a committed and caring Board of Trustees, an attentive and helpful Advisory Council, an exceptional staff and a supportive community.

I have no doubt Forty Carrots will continue to grow and innovate. Our strategic goal of expanding our reach and deepening our impact requires it. This program year saw the addition of invaluable parenting classes for women and their children finding shelter from abuse at SPARCC; next year will undoubtedly bring new opportunities.

May 31 is my last day "on the job" but come June 1, I will be joining the ranks of passionate Forty Carrots volunteers. Though I won't be bringing home a paycheck, supporting the work of Forty Carrots will be equally rewarding!

Thank you for joining me on my journey.



Warmest regards,

Betsy Kane-Hartnett
Executive Director

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Our Mission

Forty Carrots Family Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening families through educational programs for parents, children and professionals in the field.



Forty Carrots Family Center embraces diversity and does not discriminate on any basis.

Announcing

Forty Carrots Family Center's
10th Annual Free Community Speaker Event

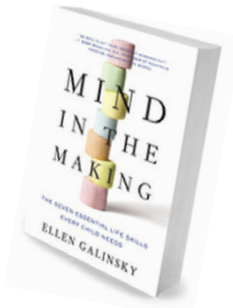
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More than 500 women, 50 Solemen, 12 wine-makers and 11 retailers uncorked the most successful Wine, Women & Shoes fund raiser yet. The 2011 event raised more than \$215,000 in November, a 33% increase over the prior year. Proceeds will support parenting education reaching as many as 2,000 families in Sarasota and Manatee Counties. Special thanks to our Presenting Sponsor, Center For Sight, for helping to make the event such a heel-clicking success. **And a special salute to our 2011 event Chairs Emily Tack and Emily Stroud.**



Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor



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Retirement — cont. from page 1

opportunities unfolding in our future."

When Betsy announced her pending retirement last summer, Rodney said the board was as prepared as it could be, with a succession plan developed a year earlier that the board immediately implemented. Among other tasks, the board assembled its transition team and appointed former board member Richard Williams to head a search committee for Betsy's replacement. Sarasota-based Workplace Solutions was hired to conduct a search throughout the Southwest Florida region for a new executive director.

Williams said interest in the position is very high, and after several months of sifting through resumes and pre-interviews with the search firm, Forty Carrots's search committee began reviewing its first round of candidates last month.

The selection won't be easy, Williams acknowledged, but the process and people in place will make the final decision easier.

"We have a diverse group of people looking at all the qualifications we feel are important to the job – a passion for early childhood and parenting education, business acumen, the ability to represent our organization in the community and instill confidence in our families, staff, the board and all of the individuals and organizations that help support us."

As for Betsy, she may be stepping down as executive director, but she will continue to support the work of Forty Carrots. Although she is leaving to play an active role in her family's business, she looks forward to a volunteer position in the organization that will allow her to remain committed and involved in its future.

"One of my proudest achievements was watching Forty Carrots grow, and then, ultimately being wise enough to recognize when it was time to let go," Betsy said. "There comes a time when the children surpass the parents, and for Forty Carrots, that time is now."

Meet Preschool Director Cheryl Evans

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts.*

--William Shakespeare

If Cheryl Evans had to describe her latest part in life, you'd find her on stage at the Preschool at Forty Carrots Family Center.

A former kindergarten teacher, Cheryl joined Forty Carrots two years ago as a parenting educator in the organization's *On Wheels* outreach program and PIP classes at the center. Her enthusiasm and expertise in early childhood education and learning through the arts came shining through, and last fall, she was thrilled to accept a promotion to director of the NAEYC-accredited preschool.

"It's the perfect fit for me," Cheryl said during a recent interview. "I've always thought of teaching as a performing art ... as educators, we're there to perform and teach the best that we can to engage and motivate children to be the best that they can be."

Cheryl, who has two adult children, left her Phoenix kindergarten classroom when she relocated to Sarasota with her husband of 23 years a couple of years ago. But, she said, it didn't take long to find her place at Forty Carrots.

"This is such a unique place," Cheryl said. "It's very unusual to find a place that combines preschool education and parenting education ... but one is so important to the other.

"From from the very first day I stepped

through those doors, I couldn't pull myself away."

Like many of Forty Carrots teachers, Evans holds advanced degrees in early childhood education. She has a Master's degree in early childhood education and Bachelor's degree in elementary education with a specialization in early childhood. She brings over 20 years of early childhood education experience to Forty Carrots and continues to teach online courses at Rio Salado College and for the University of Phoenix Sarasota.

Forty Carrots shares Cheryl's philosophy in teaching and has worked hard to equip its teachers with the tools and training they need to use the arts (music, dance, art and performance) to teach children life skills and early concepts in math, science and language arts.

"When I walk into the classroom, the teachers blow me away every day," she said. "They are proof that a play-based curriculum is working. It validates my philosophy on a daily basis and reaches children through higher level thinking skills."

As she settles into her new role, look for new and exciting summer camps, such as The Launching Pad, a space theme program that helps children get ready for kindergarten and introduces literacy, math, science, technology and engineering skills through engaging space-related activities.



Math in Motion — cont. from page 1

students ranked poorly in science and math literacy. Raising the performance of our students is a national priority.

Forty Carrots preschool teachers and parenting educators recently completed a training workshop to develop strategies that blend the arts with STEM teaching. Among other things, they learned to integrate elements in dance, such as place, level, size, shape and movement, with math fundamentals, such as number sense, measurement, sorting, patterning and much more.

In turn, they will teach the concepts to children enrolled in the preschool, as well as to parents and caregivers who attend classes at Forty Carrots Parenting Center or in "Partners In Play" classes held throughout the community.

"Learning math through motion comes so easily to kids ... movement is their first language, it's naturally how they explore their world," said Rachel Knudson, a Master Teaching Artist from Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts who trained the Forty Carrots staff this past January. "Using music, movement and props engages all of their senses. They see it, say it, do it, feel it ... it just makes it more concrete."



Special thanks to Gulf Coast Community Foundation "Gulf Coast Gives," which allowed eight donors to join together to make the training grant possible.

Partners In Play — cont. from page 1

feel when raising young children, and ultimately, reduces the incidence of child abuse and neglect.

During the past year, the agency reached more than 100 families per week, with multiple children – from mobile babies up to 5-years-old.

As parents and children enter the library class, they are drawn by a multitude of inviting play mats set up for early childhood fun. These "learning stations" are equipped with educational materials to address developmental milestones of early childhood.

Children learn through play, and as parents and children engage in early learning activities together, the parenting educators circulate around the room and create opportunities for parents to share any issues or concerns they may be experiencing that week.

"During the class, parents share any frustrations or challenges they are having with our professionally trained parenting educators; it's the perfect springboard to discuss typical child behavior and provide coaching on parenting techniques, positive discipline strategies, age-appropriate expectations and early learning development," said Christina Rodrigues, the Parenting Program Director at Forty Carrots.

Giving Back

Even more important than advice from parenting educators is fostering an unique environment where parents support and learn from each other, Rodrigues said.

"It's always a positive experience because they're helping us help ourselves and each other," said Zubeida, whose daughter is nearing 4 now.

As parents and educators share tips, advice and developmental information, you can see frustrations ebb and spirits lift with increased understanding of child behavior and the knowledge of new parenting skills.

The program consistently exceeds its outcomes measures, and has parents and grandparents returning week after week, and then year after year, with their second and third children, Rodrigues said.

For Zubeida, the group became her extended family, one that continues to help her battle a persistent bout of depression that struck unexpectedly after her daughter weaned herself from breastfeeding.

"We all come from different backgrounds, but there is something so warm and inviting about Forty Carrots' programs that it unifies you with a common mission and goals," Zubeida said. "They have been such a blessing to me at a time when I was feeling very lost. I really am so very thankful they're here for us."

For more information ...

Funding these classes is a wise investment in our community. If additional support becomes available, Forty Carrots hopes to increase the number of classes hosted in the libraries each week. Most are filled to capacity, as educators have to maintain a safe and appropriate standard. If you are interested in learning more about this program, or supporting additional classes, please call Forty Carrots at 365-7716.



CLIMBING Allowed!

The Rock Cave is one of many new playground features promoting gross motor skills and learning in children at the 5+ STAR and NAEYC-accredited Preschool at Forty Carrots Family Center. Funded by the Dart Foundation and Steinwachs Family Foundation, the new equipment and playground design enhance outdoor classrooms, sparking children's creativity and promoting learning through play. Forty Carrots held a special Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and Musical Performance in January dedicating the playgrounds and honoring the foundations that made them possible.

Support Forty Carrots 2011 Annual Fund

Forty Carrots serves a broad cross-section of the community, from teen parents and young homeless mothers to stay-at-home parents and young professionals. Here's a few ways your donation helps:

- When a 15-year-old girl finds out she's pregnant and enrolls in Riverview High's CYESIS program, she is registered for Forty Carrots parenting education classes to help her prepare for the job ahead.
- When a dad gets out of jail and hopes to regain the right to raise his 18-month-old daughter, he is sent to Forty Carrots to take a series of parenting education classes.
- When a mother flees her abusive spouse in the middle of the night and takes her children to find shelter at SPARCC, Forty Carrots parenting educators help her navigate the unique challenges of parenting during this trying and chaotic time.

Learn more by visiting fortycarrots.org or call 365-7716.



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SPRING 2012

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Newsletter / Spring 2012 / Published Irregularly / Issue 017
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