

February 2012

Parent & Child
Activity
Calendar



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 Place a piece of paper in a box. Dip a marble in paint, drop it in the box and have your child roll it around.	2 Listen to a new kind of music with your child. Talk about how it makes you feel.	3 Write a letter together to a loved one. Have your child draw pictures.	4 Have your child practice counting to five. If this is easy, count to 10 or 20.
5 Look in the mirror together. What color are your eyes? Your hair? How many hands do you have?	6 Encourage some creativity. Ask your child unusual questions. "What if your hair were made of spaghetti?"	7 Visit the post office and help your child mail Valentines today.	8 Let your child draw on paper with a white candle. His picture will magically appear when he paints over it with watercolors.	9 Give your child an empty plastic bucket and a wooden spoon. Let her tap the beat to music on her "drum."	10 Paint with something different! Try pudding, or mix food coloring and milk.	11 Watch or read the weather forecast together today. Locate the hottest and the coolest location on a map.
12 Start a made-up story. "A man went down the road and he met a ..." Let your child finish the story.	13 Plan a no TV evening. Read or play games instead.	14 Tell and show family members that you love them today.	15 Have a jump rope contest today. See how many jumps your child can do in a row.	16 Spring begins in almost a month. Talk about changes you'll see.	17 Let your child pick out a new bath toy or sponge.	18 Have a music sharing night. Share your favorite music with each other. Talk about how it makes you feel.
19 Suggest that your child try a new self-care skill today - putting on his own shoes, for example.	20 Model good table manners for your child. Say "Please pass the bread," and "Thank you very much."	21 Make your child laugh! Tell a joke, read a funny story or poem, sing a silly song or draw a cartoon.	22 Talk with your child about something she has done well today. Make this a habit.	23 Hug your child for no reason other than loving him!	24 Have your child draw a picture. Make up a story about it and tell it to somebody.	25 Go to the library and check out two books for your child. Check out some books for yourself, too.
26 Read an age-appropriate joke book with your child today.	27 Will your child start kindergarten in the fall? Find out when to register.	28 Gather some floating and sinking objects. Ask your child to test which will float or sink in water.	29 Talk to your child about the definition of a leap year - a year with one extra day inserted into February.			

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Great Start Collaborative

YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE GSC'S NEWS, INFORMATION AND EVENTS.

Great Start Collaborative of Berrien County

711 St. Joseph Ave
Berrien Springs, MI 49103



United Way of Southwest Michigan

Kids Count: Growing Poverty Threatens Children's Health

Child abuse and neglect in Berrien County jumped 19 percent over the decade while more than half of Berrien K-12 children now qualify for free and reduced price lunches, the latest Kids Count in Michigan Data Book concludes.

Michigan's long economic struggle is reflected in the new Kids Count findings. Children qualify for school-based meals if their family income is 185 percent of poverty or less. Studies confirm that families need income of about 200 percent of poverty - at least \$44,226 for a family of four - to cover basic needs without assistance. Poverty also drives up neglect cases.

"The findings show that kids in Berrien County and across Michigan are still suffering the fallout from our long recession," said Jane Zehnder-Merrell, the Kids Count in Michigan director at the Michigan League for Human Services. "Poverty in Michigan is as big a threat to our children today as polio was to a previous generation. Fortunately, we can do something about this. We know that public policy can improve children's social and economic environment.

This year's report, *Health Matters*, focuses on child health and the role that the social and economic factors in children's lives play in good health.

The annual Data Book is released by the Kids Count in Michigan project. It is a collaboration between the Michigan League for Human Services, which researches and writes the report, and Michigan's Children, which works with advocates statewide to disseminate the findings. Both are nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy organizations concerned about the well-being of children and their families.

"Children in poverty often experience hunger, abuse or neglect, extreme stress, depression or anxiety, and other issues impacting their overall health, as well as their ability to learn and grow into successful adults," said Michele Corey, vice president for programs at Michigan's Children. "The best public policies must address the whole child from cradle to career, and this data can help guide these policies."

The report ranks counties on 16 indicators of child well-being (with No. 1 being the

best), though data is not available to rank smaller counties on all 16. Trends over time are available for 15 indicators, with nine indicators improving and six worsening.

Berrien County's best ranking was 11th out of 39 counties for teen deaths with a rate of 47 deaths per 100,000 teens compared with a statewide rate of about 56.

The county's worst ranking was No. 70 for births to teens, ages 15-19, with a rate of about 48 births per 1,000 teens compared with a statewide rate of 33.

Practice Social Skills

Social skills are learned through instruction and experience - both things you can provide at home! It's good to spend time with others, too, so your child can practice what she learns. Here's how:

- Talk about how experiences make people feel. "John didn't share his cookies with Allison. How does she feel?" Say the feeling out loud and draw a face to match it. This helps your child recognize and explain emotions.
- Role-play challenging situations with your child. What if she wants to ask another child to play? What if someone says something mean? Take turns playing different parts.
- Plan activities with other kids. Invite them over or spend time at a busy playground. See how your child interacts. What are her strengths and weaknesses? Be patient as she learns different skills, such as sharing and taking turns.

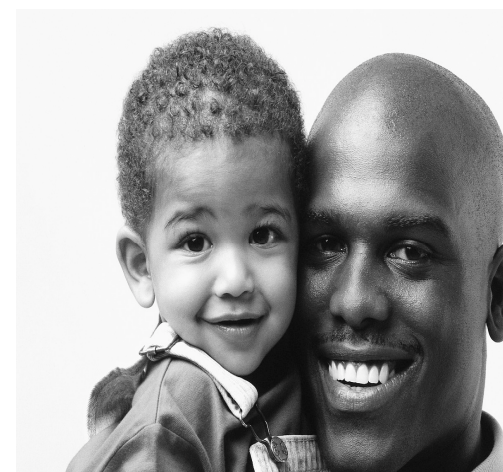
Source: J. Ireland, "Activities to Improve Children's Social Skills," [Livestrong, www.livestrong.com/article/230915-activities-to-improve-childrens-social-skills/](http://www.livestrong.com/article/230915-activities-to-improve-childrens-social-skills/).

Preschool Fair

The members of the Saint Joseph MOMS Club are hosting their annual Preschool Fair on Monday, February 6, 2012. The event will take place at First Congregational Church (2001 Niles Avenue, Saint Joseph) from 9-11 in the morning and childcare will be available. The Preschool Fair acts as a one-stop shop for parents, providing in-depth access to the wonderful selection of Saint Joseph and Stevensville preschool options. Public, Parochial, Independent, and nursery school options will be all represented, as well as information regarding parent resources programs provided by the Great Start Collaborative.



The Preschool Fair is open to the general public. It is free for schools to participate and there is no cost for parents to attend. The event is held in a convention format - each school is given a station to interact with prospective families and provide information about their respective intuitions. Each attendee receives a Preschool Fair Program that includes descriptions of all participating schools and a list of the generous sponsors. Questions can be directed to Carolyn Zmrhal at carolynzmrhalsjmc@gmail.com.



Great Start Collaborative Committees

The Great Start Collaborative Board has broken down into committees. Please feel free to join a committee!

Parenting Education Committee - will be looking at Parenting Education in Berrien County; what there is and what parents are looking for. Next meeting - February 9th at 11:30 am; Berrien RESA

Strategic Planning Committee - will be revising the Great Start Strategic Plan. Next meeting - February 14th at 11:30; Berrien RESA

Communications Committee - will be analyzing local early childhood newsletters and publications to possibly combine into one resource for parents. Next meeting - February 9th at 2:00 pm; United Way of Southwest Michigan

Asset #9: Service to Others

Assets are 40 key building blocks of development that help youth grow up healthy. The more assets youths have, the more likely they are to succeed. Fifty-one percent of youth surveyed by Search Institute had the Service to Others asset in their lives.

10 Benefits to Serving Others

To many children, the world is small. It is made up of their school, their home, their neighborhood. They may assume all schools are like their school. And they tend to think the world revolves around them.

When children start to reach out and help others, their world grows and so does their confidence. Independent Sector, an organization that studies nonprofit groups, surveyed teenagers who volunteer to help others. The young people said that through their volunteer experience they:

1. Learned to respect others.
2. Gained satisfaction from helping others.
3. Learned to be helpful and kind.
4. Learned how to get along with and relate to others.
5. Learned new skills.
6. Learned to understand people who are different from them.
7. Learned how to relate to younger children.
8. Developed leadership skills.
9. Became better people.
10. Became more patient.

By giving their time and energy, many said they received more in return. By serving others, they felt they made a difference in the world.

Three Ways to Encourage your Child to Serve Others

1. Together help a neighbor. Maybe an elderly neighbor would appreciate your mowing the lawn or shoveling the snow.
2. Help your child put together a weekly schedule of activities that includes some kind of service to others.
3. Together, think of 10 ways your family can serve others.

10 Ways to Serve as a Family

You don't need to volunteer at a shelter or do a large project to make a difference. Together as a family, do 2 of these 10 simple things for someone:

1. Play music at a nursing home.
2. Cook a meal for a single parent.
3. Take a child to a playground.
4. Provide a ride to an appointment or errand.
5. Bake cookies or another treat.
6. Give a "one-hour" coupon that's good for any project of the recipient's choice.
7. Take a dog for a walk.
8. Visit or call someone who can't leave home.
9. Change the oil in a car.
10. Cat-sit. House-sit. Child-sit. Plant-sit.



Dates to Remember

FEBRUARY 6, 2012 | Preschool Fair; 9:00 - 11:00 am; First Congregational Church

FEBRUARY 9, 2012 | Parenting Education Committee Meeting; 11:30 am; Berrien RESA

FEBRUARY 9, 2012 | Communications Committee Meeting; 2:00 pm; United Way of Southwest Michigan

FEBRUARY 14, 2012 | Strategic Plan Committee Meeting; 11:30 am; Berrien RESA

FEBRUARY 28, 2012 | Great Start Parent Coalition Meeting; 6:30 pm; Stevensville United Methodist Church

