

**September 22, 2009 GSPC Meeting Minutes
Niles, MI 9:30AM and Benton Harbor, Mi 6:30PM**

Members in attendance: Niles: Holly Wingard, Rachel Wade, Bonnie Walters, Lori Sennott (1 child). Benton Harbor: Holly Wingard, Rachel Wade and Amanda Williamson.

Meeting notes: Holly explained the structure and purpose of the Collaborative and how the Parent Coalition Fits into this structure in detail. This included a review of the GSPC Guidelines, available on our web site as well. We discussed the various activities that the GSPC is participating in, including a trip to Lansing on September 30th and participation in the Niles Apple Festival Parade on October 3rd. We discussed the recruitment in the Southern Berrien County area and that we are currently in conflict with a Parents as Teachers Playgroup in Niles, and whether or not we should move monthly meetings to Berrien Springs or switch off between Niles and Benton Harbor in order to foster the hope for one, strong, daytime parent coalition. Discussion will also take place in Benton Harbor on the 24th.

***** (specifically discussed in the pm meeting)

The evening group will focus on issues that pertain specifically to families in which parents work outside of the home and where child care is utilized, while also participating in issues that are relevant to all parents. There are many changes in funding for child care through the DHS that will be coming from the new budget proposal. Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) has been heading up the initiation of 9 regional childcare resource centers, which will focus on providing information and training for child care providers and comprehensive resources for families. There will be a data base available to parents looking for quality child care with technical assistance provided as necessary. This, as well as the web site Child Care Aware: CCAParentNetwork.org provide wonderful resources for parents as they select their providers and to help them to stay involved in the development of their children.

The Berrien County GSPC is interested in initiating a project for employers in Berrien County, in which information about these resources will be given to the Human Resources Directors of employers in Berrien County so that they can share this information with expectant mothers as they begin this process.

Next meeting will be October 20th in Benton Harbor at 6:30PM and October 22 in Benton Harbor at 9:30am for a “vision and mission” training.

**September 24, 2009 GSPC Meeting Minutes
Benton Harbor, MI 9:30AM**

Members in attendance: Holly Wingard, Rachel Wade, Amanda Williamson, Amy Mitchell, Beth Park, Jen Van Beek (2 children). Guest Speaker: Sharon Polfus from United Way.

Meeting Notes: We began with our guest speaker, Sharon Polfus from the United Way sharing information about the United Way and programs that they fund that relate to early childhood. We briefly discussed the Salvation Army childcare center, Intercare, Foster Grandparent program (working in schools one on one with children) and the Girls on the Run program. Last year was the first year that Berrien County had Girls on the Run, which is available to 3rd-5th grade girls and is a 10-12 week program. 229 girls participated in the first program, which is an outstanding number! They hope to expand this year to have all schools in Berrien participate, and then eventually to offer “Girls on Track” which is for Middle School girls.

Currently, the United Way is working hard on their funding campaign – donors are able to specify which particular agency (from the list of organizations that receive funding from UW) for your donation to go to.

United Way also kicked off the Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library in Benton Harbor at the Benton Harbor Library on October 23rd!!! Holly and Rachel were there to read to kids and get people signed up. Anyone with children 0-5 who live in Benton Harbor can sign up now. The process of raising funds to offer this program to the entire county continues and will hopefully be completed by January. If you are interested in making a donation, a tax deductible \$30 donation pays for 1 child to receive one book a month for 5 years!!

The week of October 19th will be Live United Days. The GSPC will participate in the Education component. We are looking to put together teams of 3 to go to a school to read and work in a classroom for 2 hours. We currently have 2 teams of 3. If anyone is interested in participating, please contact Holly. We will be volunteering on October 19th in the morning,

ECIC is holding a press conference in Lansing on September 30 to make a statement as the budget decisions come to a close. If you are interested in coming along, you are welcome! We will leave at 7:30am and be home by 3PM.

Next month, the GSPC will participate in a “vision and mission” training . Everyone at the meeting received the data and responses from the focus groups that the Great Start Collaborative conducted this year. Members are asked to review this information and come to the next meeting (October 22) with some notes and ideas about what the direction that they would like to see our group head in. Your input is needed and valued as we take this next step in defining what your parent coalition is going to look like!

We discussed an opportunity to adopt a teen mother and her child(ren) at Even Start for the holidays. Perhaps get each of them a gift, maybe bring Santa for a gathering and take pictures of Mom and baby? More to follow on that topic.

The Niles Apple Festival Parade is on October 3rd. We have t-shirts and candy and flyers ready to hand out. Jen will bring a CD player, and everyone should bring good kid CD’s along. We will all meet down in Niles at 1PM (Holly will be there in the morning). More information to follow.

Another proposed project is to make puppets with parents at STUMP pre-school with Kathy Hanley. She has supplies, all we would need to do is bring socks. This would be a nice opportunity for active GSPC members to meet and recruit new members while providing a wonderful play and educational item to STUMP.

We decided that we will have our October meeting and then due to Thanksgiving, and Christmas Holiday we will have a Holiday party on December 3rd at 6PM. Potluck with chicken or something like that provided, activities for the kids and focus on a theme like Christmas around the world. Again, more to follow, but mark your calendar!!

We also discussed that we need to cut our meetings down from 3 to 2. One in the day and one at night to keep everyone moving at the same pace and working together as a Coalition. We will start to alternate venues. October is in Benton Harbor, and January will be in Niles. The location for the potluck in December is to be determined.

Our next GSPC daytime meeting will be in Benton Harbor on October 22, 2009 9:30-11. If you have not received a packet of information and will be attending, please contact Holly.