

NAEYC Affiliate Successes, a new column, describes inspiring projects and strategies that other NAEYC Affiliates might learn from and replicate. If your Affiliate has a project or strategy to share, contact Susan Friedman at sfriedman@naeyc.org. The column appears in January, May, and September issues of *Young Children* and in an online archive at www.naeyc.org/yc/columns.

“Yes We Can!”

Partnering with Business to Celebrate Metro Detroit AEYC’s Month of the Young Child

DURING THE 2008 NAEYC ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN

DALLAS, I stopped into a McDonald’s restaurant for a quick meal and overheard a young child in the restaurant chanting, “Yes We Can!” The phrase was a catchy one repeated throughout the U.S. presidential campaign of President Barack Obama. The child’s affirmation so inspired me that I made a mental note to push



forward on all of our Affiliate’s projects upon my return to Detroit.

Yes We Can! happened in the months following. As chair of the Month of the Young Child (MOYC) for the Metro Detroit Association for the Education of Young Children (MDAEYC), Michigan’s largest local Affiliate, I thought again of the child in McDonald’s and also recalled another Affiliate’s proposal to McDonald’s to provide restaurant tray liners

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printed with a calendar of ideas about ways to celebrate children in April, the Month of the Young Child. Although their idea never made it beyond the drawing table, I thought, What would it take for MDAEYC to make it happen?

I understand the value of getting child development information into the hands of families. But how could I successfully convince the business community that they too can benefit from being involved?

Developing our thinking further.

Having professional networks in place is a key ingredient for success, as NAEYC has helped us learn. When two new grandparents approached me seeking advice on quality early childhood education and care, I couldn't have guessed the outcome. Having worked with these two individuals as professionals in the past on some successful projects, I shared my idea with them. John Potts, a Detroit area McDonald's proprietor, and Gheretta Harris, director of the Auxiliary Services Department of Oakland Community College (OCC), Michigan's largest community college, were excited about the Month of the Young Child tray liner idea. From that moment, it was just a matter of getting all the details in place.

As an advocate for quality early childhood care and education, I understand the value of getting child development information into the hands of families. But how could I successfully convince the business community that they too can benefit from being involved? I picked up good talking points in the Give Michigan's Kids a Great Start advocacy workshop I attended, which addressed the question, "What can the business community do to assist children?"

Businesses can

- **Be children's champions** by learning more about how quality early childhood education impacts the business community. Today's economy is knowledge driven. It is critical for our nation to have an educated younger generation ready to meet the demands of changing global competitive markets and workforces.

- **Support working families** by offering readily accessible information about child care for new and potential employees through Web site links and providing brochures about quality programs in the community.

- **Earmark corporate charitable funds** specifically for early childhood projects.


- **Talk to public officials**, fellow business leaders, employees, and the public about the vital role quality early childhood care and education plays in strengthening current and future workforces.

Getting started. There was a lot to do in making our Month of the Young Child project happen, including deciding what information to include on a printed tray liner; contacting vendors for printing quotes; clarifying how we could use the MOYC service mark; and making sure that all the participating organizations agreed on the publicity plan. Once it was apparent that the business community was committed to the project, transparency and communication were a must. For example, project partners agreed on every location that would receive the tray liners.

It soon became evident that the project would not be an overnight accomplishment. A major concern

2009 APRIL Month of the Young Child®

Focus Weeks

	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1 Follow Safe Sleep practices. www.firstcandle.org www.tomorrowchildmi.org	2 Make sure your child's immunizations are up-to-date. www.cdc.gov/vaccines	3 Well-balanced meals support growth and development. www.fns.usda.gov/tn/	4 Learn how to properly install your child's car seat. www.nhtsa.dot.gov
Week One April 1-11 Physical Development	5 Talk, sing and play, every day! www.bornlearning.org	6 Encourage children, over age 2, to drink water. The brain needs to be properly hydrated to be alert.	7 Bend and stretch and reach for the sky; exercise with your child!	8 Make sure your child gets adequate sleep. Deep sleep helps with long-term memory.	9 Serve healthy, nutritious snacks.	10 Spend time outdoors; fresh air enhances well-being.	11 Encourage playing with play-doh, water, sand, small toys. Using fingers and hands develops small muscles and stimulates the brain.
Week Two April 12-18 Social-Emotional Development	12 Smile, laugh, hug - let your child know how much you care!	13 Recognize and show appreciation for your child's efforts and accomplishments.	14 Honor your child's choices whenever possible. Set reasonable limits.	15 Be a positive role model; teach your child how to be caring.	16 Encourage your child to express feelings verbally, and in drawing and writing.	17 Encourage movement, exploration, curiosity and independence.	18 Teach your child stress-relaxation strategies such as deep-breathing and exercising.
Week Three April 19-25 Cognitive Development	19 Laugh! Laughing reduces stress and boosts the production of chemicals needed for alertness and memory.	20 Infants and toddlers love books - sturdy, washable books with simple, uncluttered pictures.	21 Engage your child in problem-solving. Problem-solving provides opportunities for new learning.	22 Encourage your child to write and draw by providing a variety of tools and materials.	23 Encourage your child to look for visual patterns - in nature, in books, in art - they're everywhere!	24 Foster an awareness of print. Point out letters and words and read signs aloud.	25 Sing, sing, sing! Use music to share information, to expand vocabulary, to have fun!
Week Four April 26-30 Language and Literacy	26 Read aloud to your child every day. It is essential for language development and for preparing your child to succeed as a reader.	27 Talk as you do simple, everyday things so your child becomes familiar with the sounds and rhythm of language.	28 Expand vocabulary by creating new verses for fingerplays and songs.	29 Use words to describe what your child is doing so actions are connected to words. "You're brushing your teeth."	30 Encourage your child to write and draw by providing a variety of tools and materials.	Learn about local and state Month of the Young Child activities and events. Visit www.MIAEYC.org	

Words your child needs to hear:

"I'm so lucky to have you." ♥ "You are a great helper." ♥ "I like it when you try so hard." ♥ "Let's talk about it." ♥ "I'm sorry." ♥ "You're very special to me." ♥ "Thank you for being patient." ♥ "You're a great kid." ♥ "I love you."

was how MDAEYC would fund the project in economically challenged Michigan during a time of budget cuts, particularly in early education.

Excitement builds. The MDAEYC board became increasingly elated about the list of activities planned for the MOYC in April. In the excitement, news of the Detroit idea had reached the state Affiliate level, and the Michigan AEYC board was counting on me to make Yes We Can! happen. Time was of the essence to bring our idea to fruition. Oakland Community College came through with an in-kind donation to print the tray liner calendars (in a perfect shade of purple), which gave them an opportunity to highlight the Early Childhood Development Program at the college.

We arranged to provide the calendars in three McDonald's in the Metro Detroit area, and liners were placed on every tray of customers eating

More than 2,000 calendars, perfectly sized to fit McDonald's serving trays, blanketed three franchises during the month of April.

inside the restaurants. Through this exposure in the business community, we believe early childhood programs demonstrated an investment in Detroit's neighborhood communities.

The outcome. More than 2,000 calendars, perfectly sized to fit McDonald's serving trays, blanketed three franchises during the month of April. They were an immediate hit among McDonald's patrons. In addition, local Metro Detroit area Head Start programs and several area libraries displayed the calendars during scheduled MOYC children's activities.

We included on the calendar a Web site address for more information. Parents suggested in future projects adding a local telephone number for information for families without access to the Internet.

Thanks to a young child's premonition of the outcome of the November

5, 2008, presidential election and an exuberant proclamation, "Yes We Can!" Metro Detroit AEYC's dream on paper *did* become a reality.

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