

October 1999

Volume I, Issue 7

Inside this Issue

- 1** Family Literacy
- 2** Family Literacy Projects in Fort Morgan and Alamosa

Literacy Facts

- 3** Web Sites on Literacy

Planting the Seeds for Literacy

New FYI Coordinator

- 4** Editorial Advisory Board and Staff

Invitation to Dialogue

Family and Youth Institute
201 Gibbons Building
Colorado State University
Fort Collins CO 80523-1501

970-491-6358 or 491-2292

Family Literacy

— by Marilyn Thayer

Did you know that . . .

- In Colorado, it is estimated that one out of 10 adults is functionally illiterate. In other words, they are unable to read, write, or perform simple math computations.
- An additional 45 million adults in the U.S. are considered marginally illiterate, with skills at or below the ninth-grade level.
- Those who are illiterate face complex challenges. They comprise 75 percent of those who are chronically unemployed, 60 percent of prison inmates, 85 percent of juveniles appearing in court, and 53 percent of women receiving public assistance.

While many educators and leaders recognize the social, political and economic implications of illiteracy, more also are realizing that the problem of illiteracy is *intergenerational* (interactive and dynamic across generations). Unfortunately, parents who have not mastered the basic academic skills are not able to share enjoyment of reading or help their children with homework. This makes it harder for the children to break the cycle of illiteracy.

Family literacy programs acknowledge the cyclical nature of illiteracy by addressing the literacy needs of both parents and children as learners. Family literacy embraces the concepts of parents as their child's first and most influential teacher, and that

the family serves as the primary source of teaching knowledge, language, values, social skills, and culture to children. The intergenerational approach to learning integrates these four primary components:

- early childhood education/school-age educational assistance,
- adult basic skills education,
- parent education/support, and
- parent/child interaction time.

The Even Start Family Centered Learning Program began as a demonstration project in 1989. The initial sites in Colorado were in Jefferson and Larimer Counties. The Fort Collins project has been recognized as an exemplary program locally, statewide and nationally. Even Start provides family literacy and support services to families through home-based instruction, center-based classes, and community-based enrichment activities in 26 sites across Colorado.

The Fort Collins model is administered jointly by the College of Applied Human Sciences and the Poudre School District. Primary services are delivered from a double-wide modular in an at-risk neighborhood.

For more information, contact Marilyn Thayer at (970) 484-2580 or visit the Even Start Learning Center at 2025 North College Avenue, Number 122, in Fort Collins.

— Marilyn Thayer is
coordinator of Even Start in
Fort Collins.

Family Literacy Projects in Fort Morgan and Alamosa

— by Jan B. Carroll, Ph.D.

Colorado State University Cooperative Extension has responded to the need to improve literacy among state residents. Family literacy projects in Fort Morgan and Alamosa are federally funded under the CYFAR (Children, Youth and Families at Risk) Initiative. Colorado's project, CO-CYFAR, uses the Even Start model of family literacy to empower limited resource families and youth who are at risk for not getting their basic human needs met to lead positive and productive lives.

The Morgan County Family Center (MCFC) seeks to create a community that embraces the well-being of all families. MCFC collaborators define *literacy* as the possession of basic communication and computation skills that enable individuals to solve problems, meet their own objectives and function effectively in our rapidly changing society. Among the costs of low literacy are decline in economic development, increased employer costs, threats to health and safety, and decreases in education and earning potential. Enhancing without duplicating existing community services is a MCFC priority. One-stop services and resource referral are emphasized. Summer and after-school programming reaches families through children and youth.

The Alamosa Even Start/LaLlave Family Center was developed by the San Luis Valley Cooperative for Family Literacy Services—a valley-wide cooperative for pro-family ser-

vices providing opportunities for families to prepare their children for starting school ready to learn. Even Start/LaLlave Family Center houses a lending library and serves as a center for communication about family issues. Programming includes English as a Second Language (ESL) training, parenting workshops, nutrition education, Adult Basic Education, word processing, and supplemental services intended to eliminate potential barriers to family literacy opportunities.

For more information on the CYFAR initiative, visit this web site: <http://www.reeusda.gov/new/4h/cyfar/stst/coststov.htm>

— *Jan Carroll is the Colorado Children, Youth and Families at Risk Initiative co-principal investigator and project director.*

Over 40 percent of adults with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty, 17 percent receive food stamps, and 70 percent have no job or a part-time job.

— *Carole Makela, Ph.D., is professor and graduate coordinator for the Department of Design and Merchandising at Colorado State University.*



National Family Literacy Day® is November 1. For ideas on planning your community's celebration, check out the web site for the National Center for Family Literacy: <http://www.familit.org/index.html>

Literacy Facts

— compiled by Elizabeth Garner



- In Colorado, between 1990 and 1996, the number of people over 16 years of age who were considered functionally illiterate dropped from one out of six to one out of 10. Nationally, the illiteracy rates dropped from one out of four to one out of five. While Colorado compares favorably to national levels, other states in the West lowered illiteracy rates even more significantly. (Colorado Literacy Research Initiative; U.S. Census 1990; Current Population Survey, 1996)
 - Literacy has a significant impact on income. The Colorado Department of Education sees non-completion of high school or GED as a strong predictor of functional illiteracy. Nationally, in 1996 long-term high school dropouts earned about one third less than high school graduates. In 1996, those who did not graduate from high school earned about 60 percent less than those who earned bachelor's degrees. (Colorado Literacy Research Initiative; Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1998)
 - Fewer than 10 percent of adults in the U.S. who could benefit from literacy programs are currently being served. (The State of Literacy, National Institute for Literacy — <http://www.nifl.gov/reder/reder.htm>)
- *Elizabeth Garner is the county information services coordinator for Colorado State University Cooperative Extension.*

Web Sites for Literacy Research, Data and Resources

http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdemgmt/facts97.htm	Colorado summary on school district data, trends in home schooling and nonpublic school enrollment
http://www.colorado.edu/libraries/govpubs/colomb/puplexp.htm	State per pupil expenditure 1992-93
http://www.colorado.edu/libraries/govpubs/colomb/scorecard/sccard95.htm	Scorecard on Colorado Public Higher Education
http://www.nifl.gov/newworld/facts.htm	Literacy facts reported by the National Institute for Literacy
http://www.nifl.gov/reder/reder.htm	Searchable database for literacy information at the state, county, sub-county, congressional district, city or town level
http://www.lrs.org/clri	Colorado Literacy Research Initiative publications, data, and resources for Colorado
http://literacynet.org/colorado/home.html	Colorado State Literacy Resource Center
http://www.stw.ed.gov/	School to work program

— compiled by Elizabeth Garner

Planting the Seeds for Literacy

— by Jan Miller-Heyl

The foundation for the love of reading begins at an early age and in the family. Those who work with families, especially families with young children, have a unique opportunity.

Ideas for programs to promote literacy include helping preschool-aged children hold a “literary tea” for their parents. Children can make simple no-bake cookies (such as peanut butter balls), help set tables and pour juice. Provide a selection of simple children’s books for families to read together. Include books that tell the story with pictures and no words and books with special cultural interest to allow for a diversity of parental reading skills and show value for a variety of cultural backgrounds.

In a family program, have parents hold their infants or toddlers while you read them a children’s story. Integrate reading into the routine of your program. Imagine the benefits.

(Thanks to Mari Martin, Dare to be You, for modeling these ideas.)

— Jan Miller-Heyl is state director, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension Dare to be You.

New Coordinator for FYI

Cheryl Asmus, Ph.D., began as coordinator of the Family and Youth Institute in September. She oversees its day-to-day operations and provides a link between FYI and the people of Colorado. She brings enthusiasm for helping families, youth and children as well as experience in grant writing.



Colorado in family and youth issues. It will develop partnerships with individuals and agencies in the community who know family and youth issues firsthand. Hopefully, FYI will be an example of how collaborative efforts by individuals across departments, disciplines,

According to Asmus, “The Family and Youth Institute is in a unique position to widen the role of the University within its land-grant mission. FYI will help the University identify the questions that need to be addressed, seek out opportunities to do research in the community, and help the community to gain better and easier access to knowledge related to meeting the needs of children and families. FYI will provide a database and resource for both Colorado State University and the people of

university and community can be MORE successful than a myriad of individual efforts.”

Asmus received a bachelor of science degree from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, and a master’s degree and doctorate in psychology from Colorado State University. Her publications include articles in several research journals and a chapter in the *Annual Review of Psychology*.

Contact her at 970-491-2292 or asmus@cahs.colostate.edu

**Editorial Advisory Board
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension**

Jan Carroll, Ph.D., 4-H Youth Development Specialist
Mary Ellen Fleming, San Luis Valley Area Agent
Gary Lancaster, Sedgwick County Director
Jan Miller-Heyl, Dare To Be You Director
Verla Noakes, Fremont County Agent
Nori Pearce, Rio Blanco County Agent
Debby Weitzel, Outreach Communications and
Technology Publications Specialist

FYI Staff

Coordinator

Cheryl Asmus, Ph.D.

Co-directors

Mary McPhail Gray, Ph.D., associate director, Colorado
State University Cooperative Extension
Bradford Sheafor, Ph.D., associate dean, College of
Applied Human Sciences, Colorado State University

Other

Elizabeth Hornbrook Garner, statistics specialist,
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension
J.P. McNulty, graduate research assistant, associate
editor
Sandy Tracy, administrative assistant, associate editor

Invitation to dialogue

What issues and concerns would you like to see addressed?

Contact FYI at:

Family and Youth Institute
201 Gibbons Building
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO. 80523-1501
Phone: 970-491-6358 or 491-2292
Fax: 970-491-7859
E-mail: asmus@cahs.colostate.edu



Visit the FYI web site at:

<http://www.colostate.edu/Colleges/CAHS/fyi/>

Coming next: Celebrating Diversity

*Volume 1, Issue 7: October 1999
Family Literacy*