



SISTERS OF CHARITY FOUNDATION of Canton

A Ministry of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine

310 Unizan Plaza, 220 Market Avenue South, Canton, OH 44702-2182
Phone: 330-454-5800 • Web: www.scfcantan.org

SPARK CONTACT INFORMATION

RECRUITERS:

Minerva Local:

Contact: Beth Holderbaum
Phone: (330) 868-5988
Email: bholderbaum@ymcastark.org

Canton City Schools:

Contact: Joanne Wilhelm

Phone: (330) 833-8000
Email: jwilmom@aol.com

Contact: Chanté Weir

Phone: (330) 493-5679
Email: PielOro3@sbcglobal.net

PARENT PARTNER QUESTIONS:

Contact: Jerri Helmeich

Phone: (330) 454-5800, ext. 28
Cell Phone: (330) 685-1367
Email: JerriHelm1041@aol.com

SPARK MAIN OFFICE:

Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton

Contact: Joni Close (Project Director)

Phone: (330) 454-5800
Fax: (330) 454-5909

Email: closejt@aol.com

Beverly Gallagher (Administrative Assistant)

Phone: (330) 454-5800

Email: bgallagher@scfcanton.org

Beverly Wilke (Office Assistant)

Phone: (330) 454-5800

Email: bwilke@scfcanton.org

The SPARK Plug (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

She mentioned that many children who enter school for the first time have trouble detaching from parents and that being able to be in the school prior to the first day of kindergarten helped to relieve some of that stress. Mom said that on the first day of school, her son said, "Mom, I know this room!" The best part is that he loves school and wants to go every day—"even on days he isn't scheduled to go!"

Another mom told me that her daughter had an easier transition into kindergarten than her older children. She said that having parent partners helping the kindergarten teachers during the first week of school really helps. She couldn't really think of any suggestions on how to improve SPARK unless of course, we could figure out a way to have her parent partner visit twice as often!

Dr. Peter Leahy, recently summarized responses from our annual SPARK parent

survey. We were pleased to see that when asked what they liked best about SPARK, an overwhelming majority of families mentioned the monthly books and activities, how SPARK prepares their child for school, and the information and feedback that the parents get themselves.

We hope that all of our SPARK kindergarteners have a wonderful year in school! We are looking forward to hearing about their experiences. Please know that we want to know what you think – your feedback is critical. Feel free to contact the SPARK office or your parent partner if you have any questions or concerns. We love hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Joni T. Close
SPARK Project Director



SISTERS OF CHARITY FOUNDATION of Canton

A Ministry of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine

PARENT NEWSLETTER
FALL 2005

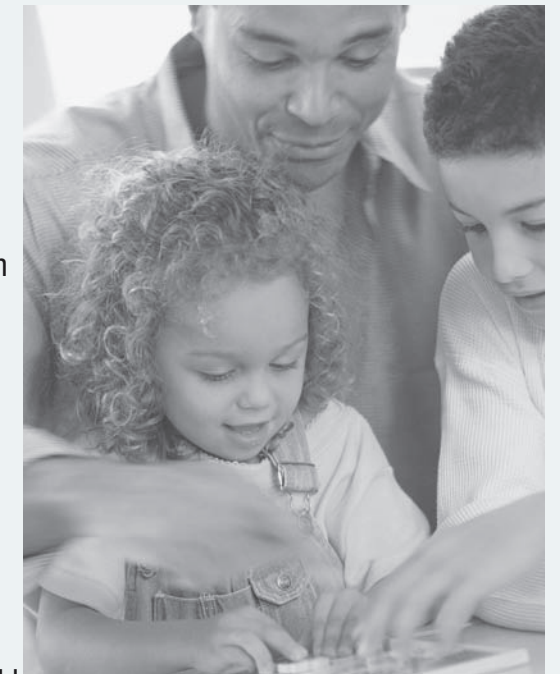
What Can A Parent Partner Do For You?

You have signed your child up for the SPARK program. You've had some visits from the parent partner and you've been pleased with the things she has done with your child. *Are you taking full advantage of the services this person can provide?*

Your parent partner begins by finding out about your child and your family. That helps her to know how to help your child get ready for kindergarten. It isn't only about all the questions a child can answer when he goes to school. Your child needs skills like listening, following directions, and being able to get along with other children and adults that will add to their success in school.

Parent partners will help you do a developmental screening with your child. Then the two of you will decide what things you can work on together so that your child is ready for school. Remember, you know your child better than anyone. And your parent partner will be able to tell you what is typical for any age group of children.

The Ohio Department of Education has developed Preschool Standards for preschool children. These are the things your child should know in the areas of literacy/language arts, math, social studies, and science before going to school. The parent partner knows the standards and will be working with your child to master these when he or she is ready for them.



Dear Families,

The start of the 2005-2006 school year was a very special time for our SPARK family as the first group of SPARK children entered kindergarten. Many parents told us that the SPARK program helped their child become more comfortable with the idea of going to school. Parents also felt better knowing that involvement in SPARK had allowed their child to enter the kindergarten classroom ready to learn and armed with the skills necessary for successful life-long learning.

The mom of a SPARK kindergartner recently spoke with her parent partner about her son's transition into school. She told her that she thought SPARK was great for kids especially for children who don't attend any preschool program. She and her son were able to participate in the *Let's Talk* program last spring. *Let's Talk* was offered in the spring for children entering kindergarten. The program was held in the school and was led by kindergarten teachers. According to the mom, this helped to make her son "warm up to kindergarten and be more at ease with his surroundings."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

FALL RECRUITMENT SCHEDULE

CANTON CITY

December 12Stark County Social Workers Network Annual Holiday Carnival @ St. Thomas United Methodist Church - 12:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M.

December 15.....Family Night with Santa and Polar Express @ McGregor Elementary - 5:30 P.M. – 7:00 P.M.

MINERVA

December 5.....Minerva YMCA - 11:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

December 6.....M.I. Day Elementary - 2:30 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.

December 7.....Minerva Library - 9:00 A.M. - 11:00 A.M.

December 9.....Cookies with Santa @ Minerva YMCA
6:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.

December 20.....Christmas Concert @ M.I. Day Elementary
7:00 PM - 9:00 P.M.



See the SPARK website
www.sparkohio.org
for additional events.

④

KEEP CHILDREN SAFE AND HEALTHY

Children Need To Be Safe and Feel Safe.

You can:

- Help them practice saying their names, addresses and phone numbers in their home languages and in English.
- Teach them about watching for cars and not talking to strangers.
- Teach them who to ask for help when they need it.

Children need to have bathroom and self-help skills.

You can:

- Teach them the words to tell other grown-ups when they need to go to the bathroom, or when they are feeling sick or hurt.
- Help them to practice going to the bathroom, washing their hands, dressing and tying their shoes.
- Encourage them to try things they have learned before they ask the teacher for help.

Children need to be able to use their hands and fingers to do small tasks.

You can:

- Help them learn to pick up, hold and use pencils, crayons, markers, paintbrushes and scissors.
- Help them make things with blocks, paper, cardboard and tape.

Children need to be able to use their arms, legs and body to make big movements.

You can:

- Encourage them to run, jump, climb, dance and move to music, as they are able.
- Give them time each day to play outdoors.

** Article content courtesy of Project Lift-Off's **Getting School Ready** resource brochure (Seattle, WA)*



Dear Dr. Cece

Dear Dr. Cece,

I am so happy that my child, Amy, is enrolled in SPARK. She looks forward to our visits with our Parent Partner. She enjoys the materials and activities our Parent Partner brings each visit. Last visit, our Parent Partner discussed with me the results of Amy's screening with the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. She said that Amy

seemed to have some areas in communication that might need attention. She wants to do some more screening of Amy's communication skills. I think that Amy talks OK. I don't want her to feel bad about the way she talks. What should I do? - Puzzled SPARK parent

Dear Puzzled,

I am so glad that Amy is enjoying her SPARK visits with your Parent Partner. This is a wonderful opportunity for Amy and you.

You can rest easy about the screening that your Parent Partner is suggesting. Your Parent Partner has a brief speech and language screening tool that she will share with Amy and you. This screening is easy for Amy to do. She will repeat words and answer "yes" or "no" to other words. Your Parent Partner will make it a game-like, fun activity for Amy. Your Parent Partner will also ask you some questions about Amy's communication skills. They will be questions that you can easily answer.

With your permission, your Parent Partner can share the results of Amy's communication screening with our highly qualified SPARK Speech and Language Therapist. The therapist will check over the results. The therapist can give ideas about Amy's strengths and areas where Amy is now ready to learn. She can make suggestions about the best ways to enhance Amy's skills in communicating. And best of all, if Amy would benefit from Speech and Language Therapy, SPARK can make sure that she receives that service. Check out the article in this newsletter about SPARK Responsive Services for further information about the responsive services available to promote the readiness of SPARK children.

Don't be puzzled any longer! SPARK will continue to provide enjoyable experiences for Amy. These experiences will be both fun and helpful as she gets ready for kindergarten.

If you would like to submit your questions to Dr. Cece, please contact your Parent Partner or mail to: Spark Ohio/Dr. Cece Column, 220 Market Avenue S. Suite 310, Canton, OH 44702

Visit The SPARK Website Today!

SPARK's web address is www.sparkohio.org. You can find the following information on the web site:

- Program details
- Frequently asked questions (FAQs)
- Program benefits
- Parenting tips
- SPARK team members & parent partners
- Community event schedule
- Newsletters
- Contact information & registration forms



SPARK Responsive Services

The SPARK program is dedicated to promoting readiness for school. For some children, there is a need for extra services in developing their readiness for school. SPARK offers Responsive Services to meet these needs for extra services. SPARK Responsive Services are offered by a team led by the SPARK Assessment Coordinator, Psychologist Dr. Cece Schweizer.

If a parent or parent partner has a concern about a child, they can share the concern with the Responsive Services Team. Also, if a child scores at or near the cut-off score on the Ages and Stages Questionnaires, the Responsive Services Team will work with you and your parent partner to be sure your child has the services he or she needs. Some children benefit from special help with speech, language, or motor development. Some children and families are experiencing challenges that can be addressed through counseling and behavior support.



For more information about SPARK Responsive Services, contact your parent partner. Your parent partner can answer questions about these services and can get you connected to the SPARK Responsive Services Team.



What Can A Parent Partner Do For You? (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

The parent partners can provide other screenings like vision or speech if there is a need. Best of all, if a screening shows that your child needs special help, SPARK will provide services for children who can not get them through other sources.

You and your parent partner can share ideas about how to teach a skill to your child. It makes for a great partnership with the goal of helping your child. If you or another family member needs services not provided by SPARK, the parent partner can give you information on who to call.

SPARK works very closely with the schools, Head Start, and child care centers. Your parent partner can help you know what choices you have if you choose to send your child to preschool. They will even help you get registered! Your parent partner will help you through every step of getting your child ready for kindergarten.



"Good parents give their children roots and wings. Roots to know where home is, wings to fly away and exercise what's been taught them."

-Jonas Salk