

**SPARK CONTACT INFORMATION**

**RECRUITERS:**  
**Minerva Local:**  
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**Canton City Schools:**  
 Contact: **Joanne Wilhelm**  
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**PARENT PARTNER QUESTIONS:**  
 Contact: **Jerri Helmreich**  
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**SPARK MAIN OFFICE:**  
 Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton  
 220 Market Avenue S. – Suite 310  
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**What Can Families and Children Expect from SPARK (continued from pg. 1)**

**Resource awareness and access**

- A connection to health services and other community resources
- Safety tips for families
- Referral to needed agencies and services
- Community support

**An idea of what schools expect of children and families**

- Help in taking the mystery out of going to school
- Help with kindergarten registration
- Knowledge of school expectations

In addition, the SPARK team will be working with schools to improve children's transition into school. They will be sure that your school knows what experiences SPARK has provided for your child before they start kindergarten. SPARK recruiters and parent partners will also be working in the schools.

We hope that every family who participates in SPARK will have a chance to network with other parents of preschool children. We hope all SPARK families will be active participants in their children's school experience. More importantly, we hope all SPARK children will enter school eager and ready to learn!



**The SPARK Plug (continued from pg. 1)**

It's up to you to take the first step. Enroll your child in SPARK today. One of our wonderful parent partners will take the next step. Please don't miss her call! We're in this together.

We are looking forward to working with you and your child!

**Joni T. Close**  
 SPARK Project Director

**SPARK Event Schedule (continued from pg. 3)**

**MINERVA EVENTS**

**WEST ELEMENTARY**

- March 11th-** Parent/Teacher Conferences 4 p.m.-8 p.m.
- April 1st-** Open House, with a special appearance by *Sparkles the Clown!* 6 p.m.-8 p.m.

**M.I. DAY ELEMENTARY**

- March 25th-** Parent/Teacher Conferences 4 p.m.-8 p.m.
- April 20th-** Kindergarten Registration: All Day
- 21st-** Kindergarten Registration: All Day
- 27th-** Kindergarten Concert, with a special appearance by *Sparkles the Clown!* 7 p.m.-8 p.m.
- May 19th-** Student Pick-ups 2 p.m.-4 p.m.

**COMMUNITY**

- March 14th-** YMCA Preschool Open House @ First Presbyterian Church with a special appearance by *Spitunia the Clown!* 2 p.m.- 4 p.m.
- June 17th - 19th-** Minerva Homecoming @ Minerva Municipal Park 6 p.m.- 10 p.m.



**Dear Families,**

After meeting with over 100 families from your neighborhoods, we carefully planned the SPARK program based on what you shared. We listened, we learned, and we came away impressed!

You told us what you want for your children—to be healthy and safe, successful in school and in life. As parents, you told us that you expect to be your child's first and most important teacher.

You said that sometimes life can be overwhelming. You want someone to turn to when you need advice or encouragement—especially to help your children. You asked for help understanding what children need to be ready for school. You wanted to know what schools expect from you and your child.

We heard you... and our parent partners are here to help.

The SPARK program supports families. We want children to be ready for kindergarten. And we want families to be in charge of making sure it happens. So let's go!

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**What Can Families and Children Expect from SPARK?**

SPARK, like many other new programs, offers families a wide variety of support services. We know that it can be confusing. The SPARK Team and Parent Partners want you to know that you can count on:

**Free books, supplies, and information**

- New books every month before your child enters kindergarten
- Fun activities to do with art supplies for your home
- Parent newsletters
- Parenting tips
- Useful resources and networking

**A caring person to work with children and families**

- A partner to care and support you
- One-on-one interaction with a Parent Partner for you and your child
- Someone to share activities with you and your child
- Someone to listen and guide you concerning your child's development
- Visits at home or at a place that you choose close to home

**Information about your child's development**

- Free screenings for your child at various ages
- Free health screenings
- Free in-depth assessment of your child, if needed
- Support for you to be your child's first and best teacher
- Information on children's developmental milestones
- Support for your child's individual needs

**An educational plan for kindergarten readiness**

- Activities to do with your child to get him/her ready for kindergarten
- Our help to understand what Ohio's standards are for pre-school
- A guided learning plan for what your child should know
- Exact definition of your child's strengths and any weaknesses
- Support for your child's individual needs
- Identify and find help for any special needs your child may have
- A plan to ensure success

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## How Can You Help Your Child Get Ready For Kindergarten?

Children need to feel excited and comfortable about starting kindergarten.

### You can:

- Let them know you're excited about them starting kindergarten.
- Give them a chance to visit their school before they start.
- Listen to their thoughts and ideas about school.
- Play a game with them to pretend they're in school already.

Children need to know what kindergarten will be like.

### You can:

- Teach them to follow directions by giving them simple steps.
- Help them learn how to share with other children, stand in line, wait their turn, and sit in a circle.

Children need to feel good about themselves.

### You can:

- Pay attention to them and listen to their ideas.
- Help them feel good about all the things they can do.
- Praise them for their strengths.
- Be patient and let them develop at their own pace.
- Teach them that all their feelings are okay, but not all their actions are okay. For example, it's okay to be upset, but it's not okay to hit others.
- Teach them ways to calm themselves down when they get frustrated.

Children need to get along with others.

### You can:

- Show them ways to make new friends.
- Help them understand how they can be friends with children who are different from them.
- Teach them what to do when someone hurts their feelings.

Children need to know how to talk with others and to listen.

### You can:

- Talk with them about things they're interested in.
- Teach them how to know when it's their turn to speak and when they need to listen.
- Teach words to describe their feelings and needs, and when to use them.

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

## MEET THE SPARK TEAM!

We are very happy to introduce our new SPARK team members to you. These members are the main contacts for children and families. They include recruiters and parent partners. Please take some time to get to know the SPARK team, and look for our recruiters at a school near you!

### JERRI HELMREICH- Learning Advocate Coordinator:

- Directs Parent Partner activities
- Bachelor's degree -Elementary Education (Ashland University)
- Master's degree - Curriculum and Instruction (Malone College)
  - \* Served in the education field for over 35 years
  - \* Specialized in early childhood education for 26 of those years



### • Previous work:

- \* Served as Director of Malone College's Weaver Child Development Center and Christian Primary School
  - Started kindergarten program
  - After 3 years began writing curriculum/ prepared paperwork for state charter

### BETH HOLDERBAUM- Recruitment Coordinator - Minerva Local Schools:

- Recruits Minerva children and enrolls them in the SPARK program
- Schedules presentations during school events and activities
- Associate's degree - Early Childhood Education (Stark State College of Technology)
- Pre-Kindergarten Associate Certificate - State Board of Education
- Currently serves as the Child Care Administrator at the Minerva Area YMCA



- \* Manages three child care sites at the facility:
  - YMCA preschool/ day care
  - Before and after school child care
  - The YMCA child care site in Malvern

### JOANNE WILHELM- Recruitment Coordinator - Canton City Schools:

- Recruits Canton City children and enrolls them in the SPARK program
- Schedules presentations and events taking place at Belle Stone, McGregor and Gibbs elementary schools in the Canton City School District
- Bachelor's degree - Justice Studies (Kent State University)
- Has over 10 years of experience as a children's advocate for the Stark County school system
- Previous work:



- \* Social Service Aide for foster children and their families
  - Stark County Department of Job and Family Services
- \* Health Technician: screening services for children in the areas of speech/ language and behavior/ mental health
  - Head Start
- \* Family Resource Manager - Pleasant Day Daycare in North Canton

## PARENT PARTNERS



Tanisha Baker



Lisa Brown



Sherry Laubacher



Delona Yohe



Suzanne Vaughn



Chante' Weir



Joanne Wilhelm

## SPARK EVENT SCHEDULE Canton City & Minerva Local School Districts

### CANTON CITY

#### MCGREGOR

- March 18th-** SPARK Recruitment (Enrollment/Information Table), 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
- April 8th-** SPARK Recruitment (Enrollment/Information Table), 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
- 30th-** Grandparent Visitation Day, 9 a.m.-11 a.m.
- May 5th-** SPARK Recruitment (Enrollment/Information Table), 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
- 30th-** Kindergarten Orientation, 9 a.m.-11 a.m.
- June 3rd-** Recognition Assembly  
Grades 3-4- 8:30 a.m.-10 a.m.  
Grades 1-2- 12:45 p.m.-2:15 p.m.  
Grade 5- 5:30 p.m.-7 p.m.
- 7th-** Family Fun Fest, with a special appearance by *Sparkles the Clown!* 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

#### GIBBS

- March 17th-** Parent Partnership Meeting, 6 p.m.-7:30 p.m.
- April 7th-** SPARK Recruitment (Enrollment/Information Table), 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m.  
April Parent Partnership Meeting (TBA)
- May** May Parent Partnership Meeting (TBA)
- 12th-** Math Literacy Night, 3 p.m.-4:30 p.m.

- June 2nd-** SPARK Recruitment (Enrollment/Information Table), 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

#### BELLE STONE

- March 24th-** Family Math Night, 4:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.
- April 14th-** SPARK Recruitment (Enrollment/Information Table), 7:30 a.m.-11 a.m.
- 30th-** Grandparent's Day, 4:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.
- May 6th-** SPARK Recruitment (Enrollment/Information Table), 7:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
- 20th-** Author's Night, 4:30 p.m.-6 p.m., PTO Elections 6 p.m., Spring Program Grade 4 Students, 6:30 p.m.

#### COMMUNITY

- May 30th-** 2004 Family Fair – Canton Civic Center (Free to Public), 12:30 p.m.-4 p.m.

See Page 4 for Minerva Event Schedule

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE AGES & STAGES QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SPARK PARENTS

Parents and children participating in SPARK are excited about the **Ages & Stages Questionnaire –the ASQ**. They are completing the ASQ to provide valuable information about what a SPARK child can and cannot do. The ASQ—a developmental screening system—provides information about children's skills in:

- Communication
- Gross Motor
- Fine Motor
- Problem Solving
- Personal-Social Development

Parents also complete the **Ages & Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional-The ASQ-SE**. Children in SPARK can be screened every 3 to 6 months.

The ASQ is a special screening system because it is completed by parents. It is very effective as a screening system. Parent Partners are trained to guide parents to complete and use the ASQ. Many families in Stark County and communities all over Ohio use the ASQ. In 5 of the 8 SPARK states, families are using the ASQ. It is fun. It is easy to understand and use. It is helpful to parents and children.

The information from the ASQ screenings is used to develop a learning plan for each SPARK child. This plan lists the steps to kindergarten readiness for each child. These steps lead to activities that develop the skills outlined in the Ohio Department of Education's Pre-Kindergarten Academic Content Standards.

The results of the ASQ screening are also used to decide if there are any concerns for a SPARK child. If there are concerns, a family has the opportunity for further assessment.

We believe that the ASQ developmental screening system helps increase children's success in kindergarten.

*"Each child carries his own blessing into the world."*

*-Yiddish Proverb*