



SPRING 2005

SECA REPORTER

SECA 2005 & DALLAS

“Hitch Your Wagon to a Star—A Voice for Southern Children”

The stars were out in Dallas this year and we had a truly great 56th annual conference.

We began the conference with **Al Stewart**. Al talked about the “*Many Hats We Wear*” and demonstrated by changing hats as he talked. We all know how hectic and harried working with young children can be, and Al provided some “tips” on how to balance your life to get the most out of each day.

On Friday morning, we were pleased to recognize **Dr. T Berry Brazelton** for his work on behalf of children and families by presenting him with the annual *Friend of Children Award*. Dr. Brazelton attended the event and was his usual and gracious self. Conference participants were enthralled to see the “legend” in person.

We also had the opportunity to recognize one of SECA’s longtime supporters with the *Outstanding Member Award*. **Dr. Margaret Puckett** of Texas, a former president of SECA and leader of the association, was recognized as the *2005 Outstanding SECA Member*.

Following Dr. Brazelton and Margaret was one of our favorite presenters, **Sharon MacDonald**. As usual, she engaged and excited

the attendees and gave some very concrete tips on how to “*Make the Hard Stuff Easy*”.

During the Public Policy Luncheon on Friday, **David Lawrence** was recognized for his work in Florida on behalf of preschool children. David was recognized with the *2005 SECA President’s Award*. **Dr. Cathy Grace**, the director of the National Center for Rural Early Childhood Learning Initiatives at Mississippi State University, was the featured speaker at the luncheon.

During the conference, we had several “special” things for attendees:

- **Lakeshore Learning** provided us with a model classroom that attendees could tour and then surprised everyone by drawing names on Saturday and giving away the equipment from the classroom.
- **Playhouse Disney & JoJo’s Circus** provided the beautiful conference bags and gifts for all attendees. One of the characters was available for pictures with participants.

On Friday afternoon, **William Raspberry**, a journalist with the *Washington Post* and expert on education issues, gave us his perspective on where education is today.

Saturday was designated as “**Provider Day**” and we had lots of “hands-on” sessions for teachers and classroom personnel that day. We also provided a special orange ribbon for child care professionals, and they were a hit with attendees.

Our general sessions on Saturday featured **Madelyn Swift** in the morning and **Stephen Fite** in the closing concert.

Madelyn talked about “Changing Our World Through Integrity and Character” and brought tears and laughter with her presentation.

Stephen helped us close the conference with a rollicking music session that had everyone on their feet, clapping and swaying to the music.

As you can see from the list of “stars”, we had them in abundance in Dallas. We’ve got some surprises for 2006, so watch for the information that will be mailed from our office at the end of the summer. *See you in Nashville, TN in 2006!*

SECA Summit 2005

The SECA leadership came together in Dallas, TX at the annual conference in the first SECA Summit. We invited two leaders from each of the SECA state affiliates to join the SECA Board of Directors to discuss how SECA should move into the future and what we could do to assist state affiliates.

From the discussion, several themes emerged:

The State Affiliate’s Role

- Provide professional development opportunities for their members.
- Mentor new leadership at the state level.
- Provide networking opportunities for members & diverse groups.
- Advocate for positive public policy initiatives at the state level.
- Increase visibility of state issues as they affect young children.
- Increase professionalism in the field.

SECA’s Role

- Be a national voice for Southern children and families.
- Provide an information source to states with customized state information on public policy issues.
- Serve as a clearinghouse for information about what’s happening in the SECA states and share that information.
- Provide leadership training at the grassroots level.
- Support state affiliates in their efforts to improve the lives of children in their states.

The discussion clearly set out the roles of both SECA and the states, and SECA is beginning to move forward on those suggestions. You’ll see in the next few months, new initiatives and member benefits to enhance the value of SECA to the states. SECA and the state affiliates are working for you.

Nominate SECA's Next President-Elect

The Board of Directors of the Southern Early Childhood Association is committed to ensuring that SECA is a representative and open organization that welcomes those who wish to serve. Nominations of candidates for SECA President-Elect may be made by:

- ❖ State or local affiliates.
- ❖ Individuals or groups.
- ❖ Nominees themselves.

As least two candidates for President-Elect are selected each election cycle. Nominations must be received by the SECA office by **September 1, 2005**. The SECA Nominating Committee will interview prospective candidates and make the final selection of the official candidates for SECA President-Elect.

STEP ONE: Consider these criteria before selecting a candidate.

- ✓ The office of President-Elect is a commitment of four years. One year is served on the Board as President-Elect, two years as President, and one year as Immediate Past President.
- ✓ During the years as President, travel to state conferences to represent the Association is expected. The majority of this travel comes in the months of September and October.
- ✓ The SECA Board of Directors meets twice a year, a full week in the spring at annual conference

and three days in the fall. Additionally, the Executive Committee of the Board meets a weekend in the summer of each year.

- ✓ The SECA President is responsible for ensuring the efficient operation of the Association and communicates weekly, bi-weekly or monthly with the Executive Director and the Board.
- ✓ The SECA President must be a diplomat, manager and leader. Leadership experiences at the state affiliate level and with other organizations is necessary for the SECA President to be successful during his/her tenure.
- ✓ The SECA President must be committed to the mission and goals of the organization and familiar with the products and services provided to SECA members.

STEP TWO: Submit these documents by September 1, 2005.

1. A **letter of nomination** stating why you think the nominee should be considered for the position of President-Elect. If this is a self-nomination, you should state why you would like to serve and what skills you bring as a candidate. The letter should be addressed to SECA Nominating Committee.
2. A **current vita or resume** of the nominee should be submitted. Be sure to include all volunteer work with the SECA state

affiliate and other related organizations.

STEP THREE: Send all nomination materials by September 1, 2005 to:

**SECA Nominating Committee
PO Box 55930
Little Rock AR 72215-5930**

The Nominating Committee will notify nominees who are to be interviewed by October 15, 2005.

The strength of an organization is its leadership, and you can make a difference today. Help SECA elect its next President.

We need to learn to set our course by the stars, not by the lights of every passing ship. Omar Bradley

*Hitch Your Wagon to
a Star by Joan Smith
2005 Helen Harley
Scholarship Recipient*

I became very excited when I was notified of my selection as Virginia's choice for the Helen Harley Scholarship. Steven Fairchild, Virginia's SECA representative, notified me, and then I received a call from Beverly Oglesby, SECA President.

After Beverly's call, reality set in. I made travel plans, I thought of things I

wanted to do in Dallas, and I wondered if I would run into any old friends. I once lived in Texas, and I still had fond memories of the food in Texas. I was looking forward to my trip.

My experience in Dallas was a memorable one. I did not run into any old friends, but I made a lot of new friends. Glenda Bean (Executive Director) and Terry Green (President-Elect), thank you for your hospitality.

I attended several great workshops which gave me information and tools I can use in my profession as a toddler teacher at Langley Air Force Base Child Development Center.

To me, the flag ceremony was impressive, mainly because the state representatives seemed to be having so much fun, and we were laughing with them, not at them.

I am sure that I will always sing "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean" with much enthusiasm in the future. (You had to be there.) Mr. Al Stewart, you were definitely one of the highlights of my experience. I now try to learn something new each day and do positive things that let children know they are valued.

The Silent Auction is a great way to raise scholarship funds. I had fun bidding on the things my Virginia affiliate sent to the auction. I got a natural high going head to head with another bidder as I tried to raise the bid on the items because I knew the money was going to a great cause.

After I returned home, I received a call from one of the vendors in the exhibit hall, Primarily- Kids. My name was drawn for a door prize! It was funny because as I filled out the entry, I said, "This is the winning entry." I received the prize shortly after I returned home. Thank you Primarily-Kids.

The conference also afforded me the opportunity to reconnect with my brother-in-law who lives in Dallas. We had not seen each other for several years, so we were able to reconnect and go out to dinner.

SECA members, thank you for my conference experience. I look forward to my next SECA conference. My wagon is hitched to a star!!

Each year, SECA provides two scholarships to assist persons in attending the SECA conference. For the 2006 conference in Nashville, TN, the states of **West Virginia** and **Alabama** will select those scholarship recipients. If you're interested in applying for the scholarship, contact your state affiliate for information. You can find your state affiliate contact information by going to the SECA website at www.southernearlychildhood.org and clicking on The SECA States. Click on your state and the contact information will appear.

Truths Adults Have Learned

- ❑ Raising teenagers is like trying to nail Jell-O to a tree.
- ❑ Middle age is when you choose cereal for the fiber, not the toy.
- ❑ If you can remain calm, you don't have all the facts.
- ❑ You're getting old when you stoop to tie your shoes and wonder what else you can do while you're down there.
- ❑ You appreciate the fact that wrinkles don't hurt!

Truths Children Have Learned

- ❑ When your Mom is mad at your Dad, don't let her brush your hair.
- ❑ You can't trust dogs to watch your food.
- ❑ You can't hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk.
- ❑ Puppies still have bad breath even after eating a Tic-Tac!

Source: *Good Stuff*, a monthly collection of insights and inspiration, Malvern, PA.

From Our Members

The Importance of Training in an Early Childhood Program

As my staff returns every year to their classrooms, we reflect on what the new school year will bring. At the first staff meeting we begin to discuss our direction for the year and the issue of training is always at the forefront of any discussion.

First, let me say that our center is a part-time program that is licensed by the State of Florida Department of Children and Families; therefore, each staff member has completed the 45 hours mandated by the state. We also participate in the TEACH scholarship program sponsored by the Florida Children's Forum. Our center has always valued training as an important part of our school program. However, as with most educational training, several factors are crucial in providing a worthy program:

- 1) The **quality of the material** being given and the **presentation by the instructor**. As with any teaching, the instructor is key to presenting the information in an interesting manner. Most early childhood teachers come from a wide range of educational backgrounds.
- 2) The **staff must be encouraged to attend** and look forward to the subject being presented. The key factor in staff participation is the quality of the course being presented. If your staff can rely

on you to provide interesting, informative courses, then they will always be eager to attend.

As early childhood education programs continue to expand and grow, all of those involved, staff and administration, need to work together to raise the educational level of all programs. Offering quality training should be the priority of all early childhood programs that value early childhood education.

Excerpted from an article submitted by Lynn Brown, Director, The Center for Early Childhood Education, First Presbyterian Church, Maitland, Florida

Questions to Consider

- 1) What kind of time commitment will the training require?
- 2) Is the training schedule sensitive to the needs of the staff?
- 3) Will the training address the specific issues faced by the staff in our early childhood program?
- 4) Can we afford the training? Are there sources to assist in covering these costs?
- 5) How will learning be assessed?
- 6) Does this training meet the criteria required by the licensing agency?

Paraphrased from Selecting a Leadership Training Program, *Young Children*, Winter 2005, pg. 38.

Preparing for the Best, Our Future

In 2002, voters elected to change the Florida Constitution by including quality preschool education which would be available for all 4-year-olds. This would become effective in the fall 2005. The mystery still remains on how we as a state will fund, house and implement this program.

The promise is to provide high quality pre-kindergarten for all children. As a child care director, a former preschool teacher for over 20 years, and a mother of four, I have taken an oath to be an advocate for all children. We need to make sure this program is implemented properly and that the impact on preparing these children for kindergarten is measurable. This program needs to be offered in the private and public sector, operate for 4-6 hours a day, employ credentialed personnel, governed by the State Department of Education with local control, and offer developmentally appropriate research based curriculum.

We have ethical responsibilities to children, families and employees. We as taxpayers and voters need to find the money to take proper care of the children as well as those who will be employed in these facilities. The concept of Universal Pre-K will hold all accountable, including our government, and establish proper guidelines for a solid education that will not be seen as just babysitting. We may need to talk again about the penny sales tax. We pay extra tax for vacations and when we visit other states. Don't our children deserve to be considered more worthy than this?

Researchers say that higher quality programs, low staff-child ratios, safety and health standards and qualified teachers produce better outcomes for children which in turn relates to better behavior, development and productive citizens. We cannot put our heads in the sand. We cannot compromise any longer. Our children deserve the best. I urge you to educate yourself on this matter and you will see by making this investment, we are investing in the future!

*Article provided by Jayne Hafer,
Director, NE Focal Point
Intergenerational Child Care Center,
Deerfield Beach, FL.*

For updated information about Florida's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program, go to the website of the Early Childhood Association of Florida, our affiliate in Florida, at www.ecaooffl.org or call 813-989-9973.

Battling Southern Fried Foods

With the obesity epidemic reaching national proportions, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is making an effort to educate consumers about healthy choices and lifestyles.

The South is famous for its cuisine and that often means “fried”. If you’ve lived in the South for any amount of time, you’ve encountered fried chicken and fried catfish at some social event. You’ve also been offered cornbread with tons of butter and maybe even tried fried green tomatoes.

The South has the infamous distinction of being the “Stroke Belt”. In 1962, health officials began to notice a large concentration of counties with high stroke death rates in the coastal states of North and South Carolina and Georgia. More than three decades later, the high stroke rates have shifted from that region to counties in the Mississippi Delta.

Our Southern cuisine consists of many vegetables; unfortunately, they’re often fried or prepared with bacon grease and meat drippings. Nutritionists think food preparation practices are one of the greatest contributors to the South’s obesity problems. Even at the headquarters of the CDC in Atlanta, Georgia, changes are taking place. They are working to serve favorite foods in healthy ways in their employee cafeteria. The CDC’s goals are to educate people to cook with less fat and sugar and to

promote the idea of eating five servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Preparing favorite foods in alternate ways and making good choices when eating out are the first steps toward addressing the obesity epidemic.

Early childhood educators have a special role to play in encouraging healthy choices for children and educating parents about adopting healthy lifestyles. **During the next few months, you’ll be receiving information from SECA about how *YOU*, as an early childhood educator, can make a difference in ensuring that children are healthy and active.**

SECA’s mission is to promote the health and well-being of children and families. Ensuring that adults and children have the information necessary to maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle is just one of things you can contribute to the cause.

Don’t forget to listen while you teach!

This information is for all of us, and you’re a role model for the young children in your care. Be sure that your life includes physical exercise, healthy eating and stress management. Our career choices often leave us “harried and hurried”, and it’s often too easy to say “I’m too tired to exercise.” or stop by the nearest fast food establishment to pick up dinner. Take a little time to bring yourself to a healthier place, and you’ll find that it’s easy to teach young children about making good choices.

Glenda Bean

Executive Director

