

Parenting Counts

Upcoming Changes!

Reading is fun! There are many things to talk and learn about from books. Your child will soon be recognizing colors, letters, characters and concepts due to your interaction with them and a book. Talk, enjoy, read and just have fun with books!

why read
today

Greater Mankato Area United Way (GMAUW) is making Exciting Changes to the Books for Kids Program in 2012!

- **Newsletter redesign.** The *Parenting Counts* newsletter will now be called the *First Steps* newsletter. GMAUW is launching a new initiative called First Steps in January. Watch for more details!
- **Information from local providers.** Each month the newsletter will include information from local providers including: Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), Ready! for Kindergarten, and Childcare Resource and Referral Network.
- **Early Learning Digest.** GMAUW is adopting use of the parenting education publication, *Early Learning Digest*, which is developed by the Working Families Resource Center in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education. This will be sent with the First Steps newsletter each month to ensure current and quality parenting information is supplied to the families in our region.
- **More books throughout the year!** You can expect to receive more books throughout the year. This will promote the purpose of the program to instill the joy of reading in children by providing books delivered to your home as well as making parenting resources available to families who live or work in the greater Mankato area.

Why is Reading Important for Children?

Reading at an early age has been proven to increase school readiness. Reading books aloud with children every day provides them the following benefits:

- Builds language and pre-literacy skills,
- Exposes them to new ideas,
- Builds their social/emotional and problem solving skills,
- Inspires them to become life-long learners,
- And increases the bond between caregiver and child as they read together.

funny bones



- Q. What do snowmen eat for breakfast?
A. Frosted Flakes.
- Q. What kind of bird can write?
A. A Pen-quin.
- Q. Why was Santa's little helper sad?
A. He had low elf-esteem.
- Q. Why do birds fly south in the winter?
A. Because it's too far to walk.



Need Help? Dial 2-1-1

United Way 211 is your community help line:

If you or someone you know needs help, just dial 2-1-1 on any land-line phone or dial 1-800-543-7709 on any cell phone. Get connected to the help and community resources that will help you get through tough times. It's free and confidential! Multilingual service is available.

United Way 2-1-1 connects you to information about:

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|-----------------|------------------------|
| Childcare | Housing |
| Education | Employment |
| Health Services | Parenting Resources |
| Legal Help | Emergency Preparedness |
| Transportation | Energy Assistance |
| Counseling | Food |
| And much more | |

Website: www.211unitedway.org

kids in the kitchen

Crunchy Banana Cereal

Using foods commonly found in the refrigerator and pantry, kids can make their own breakfast cereal treat or a nutritious snack. Packed with bone-building calcium, this recipe is tasty, too!

- 1 banana
- 1 cup lowfat milk
- 2-3 graham crackers
- 1 tbsp. of wheat germ (optional)

Peel and cut up banana. Mash pieces in a bowl. Crumble graham crackers over banana. Pour milk in bowl. Stir gently. Add wheat germ, if you choose.

Source: The Children's Museum Kids are Cooking Program, Boston, MA

activity block

Play a Listening Game

Have your child close her eyes and guess the sounds you make. Use household objects, such as keys, coins, silverware, or a whistle. Tap on a pot with a spoon, snap your fingers, or click your tongue. Source: *fun.familyeducation.com*

Play Target Toss

Toss bean bags or balls into a large bucket or box. Help your child count how many he gets in the target. A ball of yarn or rolled up socks also work well for an indoor target game. Source: *Blue Earth County Maternal Child Health Program*

Draw with your Child

Take time to draw with your child when she wants to get out paper and crayons. Draw large shapes and let your child color them in. Source: *Blue Earth County Maternal Child Health Program*