

firstSteps

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2012



CONNECTING FAMILIES TO LOCAL RESOURCES

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT:

Do you qualify for help? Check out the Bridge to Benefits website to see!

Bridge to Benefits uses an online screening tool designed to help families and individuals understand if they are eligible for Minnesota programs that help people meet their basic needs. In Minnesota, thousands of eligible families are not participating in these programs or claiming the tax credits that could provide more stability for their families.

To see if you or someone else may be eligible for help, visit <http://mn.bridgetobenefits.org> to use the Eligibility Screening Tool. You will be asked a few simple questions but you will NOT be asked to give information that identifies you. **It's easy, confidential and free!**



Did you know children who have not developed some basic reading skills by the time they enter school are 3-4 times more likely to drop out in later years?

READY! for Kindergarten classes encourage parents and care-givers to talk, sing, read and play with children in simple ways that foster essential pre-literacy, pre-math and social-emotional skills. Age-appropriate activities are designed to start at birth and continue through age five.

Registration information for *Ready!* classes can be found at mankatocer.com. Sign up for February classes begins in January. For more information contact the program coordinator, Linda Kilander at 387-5501, ext 3080.

CHILD CARE RESOURCE & REFERRAL



Child Care Resource & Referral is dedicated to assisting families, child care providers and the community with child care information and services. CCR&R provides parents with information and tools to help them choose the best care option for their child.

CCR&R uses Minnesota's Parent Aware star rating tool to help you find quality, nurturing programs that will help prepare your babies, toddlers and preschoolers for school and life.

For additional information, contact CCR&R at: 101 North Second Street, Suite 105, Mankato 507-389-1716 / 800-373-2782 or www.c2r2.org.



Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is a school program that provides parenting information and support to all types of families with children ages birth to five years. Play based learning is practiced in all of our classes. Come meet other parents of children similar in age to yours. A new 12 week session is starting in Mankato in January. Call the Mankato office at 625-4620 to get registered or check out our website at www.mankatoecfe.org. If you are outside Mankato, check your local ECFE for information on the next session in your area.

Try this at home: Help your child gather all the gloves and mittens in your home. Talk about what you found; size, colors, mittens vs. gloves, match pairs, try patterning.

NEWSLETTER AND BOOKS FOR KIDS SPONSORS:



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 2012

Winter Storytimes at the North Mankato Taylor Library - January 23rd through February 29th.

- **Family Storytime** - This story time session is aimed for preschoolers, elementary aged children, and their parents. Mondays at 6:30 p.m.
- **Preschool Storytime** - This storytime is aimed for children ages 3-5 and their parents and will include stories, fingerplays, songs, and flannelboards. Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.

*Please sign up for only Tuesdays or only Wednesdays... not both. We do request that you register your child for our storytime sessions by stopping by or calling the library at 345-5120.

St. Peter Library - Regular preschool story times on Wednesday at 10:15 a.m. (4th, 11th, 18th, 25th).

Blue Earth County Library - Regular preschool story times on Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. (3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th, 31st) and Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. (5th, 12th, 19th, 26th).

Stories from Around the World - The first Thursday of each month Blue Earth County Library features readers from Greater Mankato Diversity Council with stories from around the world. Please mark February 2nd on your calendar for the next featured story from around the world.

Early Childhood Family Education - ECFE classes and open play-times resume Monday, January 9th. Registrations will continue to be taken for classes through January.

- **Open Gym Time - Early Childhood Center** - On Fridays we have our Open Gym Time at Lincoln Community Center from 10:00a.m.-11:30 a.m. The fee is \$2 per family. Located at 110 Fulton Street, Mankato.
- **Open Playtime - Early Childhood Center** - This is a free playtime Thursday evenings from 5:45 p.m.-7:00 p.m. Located at 2077 Lookout Drive, North Mankato.

Blue Earth County Historical Society's Heritage Center -The Heritage Center has a dress up play area, picture books, and puzzles to play with as well as farm animal puppets for hands-on experiences for the young child. Check us out! The Heritage Center is open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00a.m. to 6:00p.m. and Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10:00a.m. to 4:00p.m. Admission is \$5/Adults and \$2/Children ages 5-17. The Heritage Center is located at 415 East Cherry Street, Mankato.