

Rx for reading

Carol Scoggins, Editor

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Your "Read for Health" newsletter • Summer 2008



SUMMER EDITION

The main goal of the Read for Health Initiative is to promote and improve literacy among Florida families thereby enabling them to access health care appropriately, understand and follow basic health care instructions, interact with their children in ways that lead to optimal growth and development and make informed life and health decisions.

One of the ways the Read for Health Initiative is accomplishing this goal is to actively engage Department of Health employees in volunteering to read to Florida's children to promote health messages.

This past quarter, the Read for Health Initiative in partnership with the Comprehensive Cancer Control Program and the Office of Injury Prevention introduced its fifth and sixth in a series of "Health Literacy in the Classroom" volunteer reading projects focusing on skin cancer and drowning prevention. The projects resulted in volunteers reading to approximately 60,000 of Florida's children across the state.

Please sit back and enjoy our Summer Edition:

Few experiences capture the essence of summer as strongly as a day at the beach or in a pool. When the hot, humid weather hits, that's about the only place we want to be, lounging in the sand, cooling off at the pool, and relaxing under the sun. Given the perfection of a summer day, the only way to make it better is by remembering our water safety rules and by applying sunscreen.





“Skin Sense, A Story about Sun Safety for Young Children”, was selected to provide skin cancer awareness and health information to Florida’s children and to encourage them, and their families, to be sun safe. Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers and is also one of the most preventable cancers. Most people are not aware that not only can overexposure to the sun result in a painful sunburn, but can potentially lead to serious health problems, including melanoma.

Melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer. If we start teaching our children at a very young age we can begin to make sun safety a lifelong habit which will, in turn, reduce the risk of future skin cancer diagnoses.

Overexposure to the sun results in a painful sunburn, but can potentially lead to serious health problems, including melanoma.

“Stewie the Duck Learns to Swim”

Florida overwhelmingly has the highest unintentional drowning death rate in the nation for the 1 to 4 year old age group and is third in the nation for overall drowning death rates between 1999 and 2004. In a continued effort to reduce drowning rates in Florida and connect reading and health prevention education **“Stewie the Duck Learns to Swim”** was selected. Written for children ages two through six, the book conveys an important message of how to be safe near the water through the story of Stewie, a duck who wants to swim with the 'big ducks,' but is prevented from going in the water by his older sister until he learns the water safety rules.

Stewie the Duck Song
(Sung to Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star)
Don't jump in 'til you learn to swim,
Cover your chest with a safe life vest.
A grown-up must watch you in the pool.
You'll be safe if you learn these rules.
Don't jump in 'til you learn to swim,
Stewie the duck wants you safe like him.



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Mary Ward

Healthy People, Healthy
Communities Coordinator, Suwannee
County Health Department

In May, the Suwannee County Health
Department was able to participate
in two "Read for Health" events.

Twelve staff members were able to read "**Stewie the Duck Learns to Swim**" to over 100 kindergarten and first grade students at Suwannee Primary School. The students and teachers loved it! This was a great little story the kids could enjoy while learning important water safety rules. The students also enjoyed telling us about their own swimming experiences and singing "Don't Jump in until You Learn to Swim." The teachers and students were thankful for us coming and really appreciated receiving the book. One of our nurses received a homemade thank you card filled with pages made by each student.

Later in the month of May, we were able to read "**Skin Sense**" and stress the importance of sunscreen to several first grade classes. Again, the students really enjoyed the book and loved having a guest reader in their classroom. Through our local American Cancer Society, we were able to get small packs of sunscreen for each class. Providing them with the sunscreen really impressed upon them how important sun safety is. Some of the classes were able to use the sunscreen for the school field day.

The timing of these books was perfect! When we asked the students what their plans were for the summer, almost all of them mentioned swimming or other outdoor activities. We hope the messages delivered through the books will stay with the students all summer and for the rest of their lives. We were so pleased to be able to offer these programs for our youth and hope to do more programs like this in the future.



read for health

Florida Department of Health

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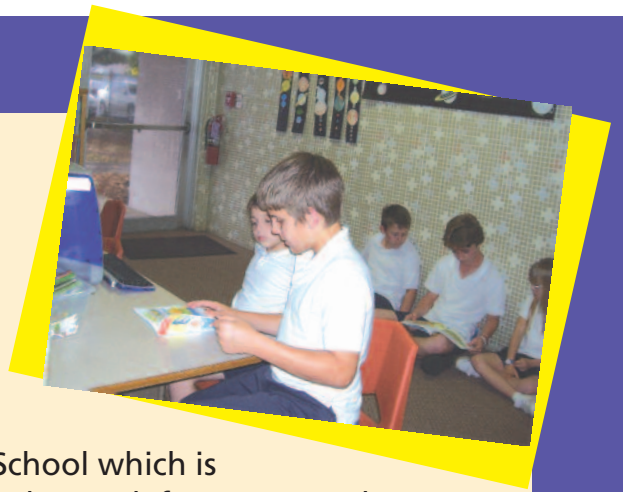
Wanda Barker, RNS, BSN
Care Coordinator,
USF/St. Petersburg CMS

When I read the e-mail about the Read for Health volunteer reading project, I immediately thought of the children at my daughter's school. She attends Morningstar School which is a non-graded school for children 6 -14 years who work from 1st to 8th grade level. These are children who have a variety of learning disabilities. This is a small school with no more than 10 children per classroom and a total of 50 children in the school. It is run by the Catholic Diocese and children who qualify for the McKay scholarship get tuition assistance. All of the teachers are experienced in working with children with learning disabilities and do a great job with the children. My daughter has attended for 4 years after struggling in a public school setting and she has attained many successes there that have helped boost her self-esteem.

Pinellas County has a lot of attractive water areas from lakes and ponds to the beach and backyard pools. Because the children at Morningstar have special needs, the issues of safety are sometimes more important for them. For this reason, I thought the book on water safety would be a great learning experience for them.

The older children at Morningstar have a program with the younger children where they read to them. They are called reading buddies. Our Read for Health project was held on the day that the buddies read together and the older children read to the younger children about Stewie and his water safety rules. The classroom teacher joined in with Stewie's water safety rules song. One set of readers even took turns reading the pages. At the end, we had time for discussion and the children eagerly answered questions on water safety rules that they had learned from the book. All of the children enjoyed the story and were excited about the coloring and activity books to take home. A book was left for each of the 5 classrooms.

Thank you for providing the books and workbooks for the children to enjoy. I am pleased to be a part of an agency that shows concern for the safety of our most precious resources, our children.



**Ellen Pruitt, Nursing Director
Children's Medical Services
Fort Pierce**

On April 11, 2008 a few volunteers from Fort Pierce Children's Medical Services visited a local day care to read **"Stewie the Duck Learns to Swim"** and engage the children in the song that accompanied the story. The sing-along was important to all of us, knowing that if just one child remembered the words it may save their life. None of us were shy, we belted out the song and the kids joined in. They loved it! By the end of the story and after singing the song 4 times, they repeated the water safety message. Hopefully, the message will stick with them. As care coordinators of near drowning victims, we treasured our moments with this group of healthy children, knowing that what we were presenting would hopefully ensure none of them would become a drowning victim. We truly appreciate the opportunity to engage our community and look forward to more Read for Health Initiatives.

Cathy Register, RN is the reader (in pink). Also participating were, Sharon Armstrong, Sue Rowe, Ellen Pruitt, Lainie Rompf, Faye Nickerson, and Kristin Roberts.



A Day With Kindergarteners & Stewie

**Judy Der, 5th Grade Teacher, Robinson
Elementary School, Plant City, FL**

At J. S. Robinson Elem. School in Plant City, Florida, Mrs. Der's 5th graders worked hard to teach their kindergarten buddies about water safety. The 5th graders practiced for three days, reading, singing and reading over and over the book they had received from the Read for Health Initiative. The fifth graders made plans on how to present this important information to their buddies. They decided to use a projector to put the book up on the big screen so all could see the great pictures as they read the story to their kindergarten friends. They wanted their presentation, **"Stewie the Duck Learns to Swim,"** to be



the best ever. Each student had a page of the book to learn and present. One by one the students gathered their buddies on the floor of the classroom and read their book with pride and joy. Their simple yet important goal was to teach Mrs. Hoeomus' kindergarten class that they needed to be safe around and in the water. They not only taught the lesson from the book but had fun doing it. Did I mention the really fun song we all learned and sang? They sang a song about the water safety rules that each child needed to learn to be safe around and in the water. The best part of all is that both classes learned about water safety by reading, listening, singing and coloring the great package of materials the Department of Health shared with us for our Health Literacy Day.

**Darlene Toth, Pinellas County Health Department
Disease Control - Hepatitis Unit**

The month of May is designated as Skin Cancer Awareness Month. Much recognition has been given by the Pinellas County Health Department, and also by me personally.

I am a grateful 6 year metastatic melanoma survivor and feel blessed that I am able to inspire hope and prevention to others. On May 2nd my children and I participated in the annual Relay for Life, a survivor celebration and fundraising event held by the American Cancer Society. This year I was gifted the opportunity to be a survivor speaker during the Luminaria Ceremony. Much fun was had by all.

The Disease Control Division took the opportunity to publicize sun safety awareness and skin cancer prevention through the use of the employee-viewed bulletin board located near our building's break room. Together with

Peggy Goergen, we created a colorful array of pictures, media clippings, and prevention information that was sure to capture the eye of passers by. The main focus was how to best protect children from overexposure to the sun. That too was a joy in creativity.

*The month of May is designated as
Skin Cancer Awareness Month.*



The children were very attentive to the presentation and quite receptive to the material.

Perhaps my greatest gift came through the multiple outreach events allowing me to share personally with children in our community. In connection with the Department of Health's Read for Health literacy program, I was provided with books entitled, "Skin Sense – A Story about Sun Safety for Young Children." It is a brightly colored book illustrated by the author's daughter for the benefit of other children to learn about sun safety practices. The goal was to reach elementary age children, and I am blessed to be mom to 1st and 3rd graders. On May 23rd I visited Northshore Elementary and was able to speak with all four 1st grade classes there. The children were very attentive to the presentation and quite receptive to the material.



I witnessed all eyes upon me as I cheerfully read from the book. They delighted in the interaction when I would ask them to answer questions or call for feedback on their experiences. After completing the book we engaged in much commentary. It was amazing to hear their interest, and often they would ask questions on information that wasn't covered in the book. On June 10th I made a jaunt over to our local YMCA to share the book with the children attending summer camp. I felt this was an important venue because these children will spend much time outdoors. They too were very receptive to the material. The director later relayed to me that the following day as they were preparing to go to the outdoor swimming pool, the children were applying their

sunscreen and commenting to each other and to the coaches on all the pertinent parts of the body to be covered. As a survivor I was really inspired that our youth is learning about sun safety and utilizing prevention tools. Thank you to the Department of Health for this amazing experience!!

**Jane DuPont-Ingram,
Healthy Families Putnam
Program Manager
Putnam County Health Department**

I read the book "Stewie the Duck Learns to Swim" to the 3 and 4 year olds at Story Book Cottage located in Palatka. I also went to River Breeze Elementary school and read to the children. Florida is number one in the nation for drowning victims under the age of five, surpassing California. Putnam County had 9 drowning victims last year. Putnam County has 105 square miles of water and the St. Johns River is a major form of recreation for residents.

I want to thank the Read for Health Initiative and the Florida Department of Health for allowing this opportunity to staff and specifically to the children in our county. The book was a great way to educate children on water safety rules. The kids loved it! We talked about the use of water and that it is our friend and discussed the dangers of water as well. The kids were great and not a one of them laughed at my singing. Healthy Families Putnam also provided the children with craft materials. After reading the book, we made Stewie the Duck puppets and sang the song together. The teachers loved the activity and the fact that they could keep the book and CD so they could continue stressing water safety rules throughout the year.

At Story Book Cottage, the kids and I took a tour of the pool area on site with our Stewie the Duck puppets. The puppets were a great asset and reiterated the water safety rules. I have stopped in at the school and as soon as I walk in the children want me to sing the water safety song for them. On behalf of the Healthy Families Putnam staff and the children of Putnam County, I want to thank the Read for Health Initiative and the Department of Health for this opportunity.





Our children are our greatest assets and often they are the most vulnerable victims of abuse and unintentional injuries. The Read for Health Initiative provided us with a tool that was not just fun but also a fun way to provide prevention education to children.



*Thank you again for this opportunity;
I know that this has saved a child's life!*

A MESSAGE FROM THE READ FOR HEALTH COORDINATOR

It is such a pleasure to work with so many unrecognized individuals who volunteer to read to Florida's children and who help make the Read for Health Initiative's "Health Literacy in the Classroom Volunteer Reading Projects", such a success. Since our first project in October 2006, over 180,000 children have been read to with positive health promotion messages and over 7,200 health promoting books have been donated to classrooms across the state. A special thank you to the Comprehensive Cancer Control Program and the Office of Injury Prevention for sponsoring this quarter's books.

If you would like to sponsor a health promoting book please contact, Carol Scoggins, State Read for Health Coordinator at: carol_scoggins@doh.state.fl.us for more information.

RESOURCES

- Skin Sense, A Story About Sun Safety for Young Children, by Lori Glickman
LGBooksforkids@aol.com or call (941) 744-6942
- Stewie the Duck Learns to Swim, by Kim and Stew Leonard, Jr.
with Dr. Lawrence E. Shapiro,
http://www.stewleonards.com/water_safety/home.cfm
- The Comprehensive Cancer Control Program
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/cancer/index.html>
- The Office of Injury Prevention
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Workforce/InjuryPrevention/Index.html>