

Read to Me

A newsletter for families and others who care about the future of young people.

Volume 2, Issue 2

Spring 2008

Special Points of Interest in this newsletter:

- Imagination Library Update
- Using Stories to Teach Your Child
- The History of Storytelling
- Collecting Family Stories
- Learning with Playdough



United Way
of Southwest Minnesota

Parents please join us for a great presentation -
Sleepless in America:
Is Your Child Misbehaving or Missing Sleep
Tuesday, March 18, 2008
Marshall Middle School Theater
SEE ENCLOSED FLYER FOR DETAILED INFORMATION

Imagination Library Update

United Way of Southwest Minnesota became the local sponsor of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Program in August 2005. If you are reading this newsletter your child is one of 420,000 children across America that receives a book each and every month. In 2007, just under 4.5 million books were mailed. **In this area, almost 2,300 children take part in the Imagination Library program.**

To enroll in Imagination Library, a child must be between the ages of birth to five years old. The child needs to live within this area (defined by the area served by the following school districts: Balaton, Canby, Lake Benton, Lakeview, Lincoln HI, Lynd, Marshall, Milroy, Minneota, Murray County Central,

Russell-Tyler-Ruthton, Tracy, Walnut Grove/Westbrook, Yellow Medicine East. Private or charter schools are included.)

The books are free to families. The only 'catch' is that parents need to take time to read out loud to their child. It sounds almost too simple to be true, but by reading regularly with your children during their preschool years, you are giving them the biggest boost toward a successful education that they will ever get.

Registration: Parents or guardians can enroll their child (or children) under five years of age online (www.unitedwayswmn.org) or by submitting a short registration form to United Way of Southwest Minnesota. It is important to promptly notify United Way if your address changes.

The local cost of the program is \$30 per child per year. This is the actual cost of the 12 books plus bulk library rate postage. **There is no charge or fee or donation required or expected for enrollment.**

The program is funded locally through contributors to the annual United Way campaign and by other special underwriters like several area Rotary Clubs, the Marshall Crime Prevention Fund and other service clubs. Contributors and underwriters of the program are always welcome and that support is greatly appreciated at any time. Contributions can be sent to United Way of Southwest MN, P.O. Box 41, Marshall, MN 56258.

Please keep your address current with United Way of Southwest Minnesota



Imagination Library books are mailed out at bulk library rates and **can not be forwarded** by the post office.

Call us (507-929-2273) or e-mail us (unitedway@unitedwayswmn.org) right away if your address changes. Even though our office changes the database immediately upon notification, it takes 6-8 weeks for address changes to go into effect at the publisher.

Using Stories to Teach Your Child about Language and Family

Anytime is a good time to tell family stories. It is a good way to communicate with your children and a good way to develop literacy skills. Studies of early readers show they come from homes where oral language is used in a variety of ways.



Family stories are great because you can tell them anywhere and anytime – no batteries or books required. Tell them about “When mommy was a girl...,” “Grandma’s favorite cookie is....,” “Daddy’s best birthday present ever was

Do you have a few minutes while waiting in the check-out line? Tell your child the story of the day he was born. Stuck in traffic? Tell your child about your favorite foods when you were little. Then ask him to share his favorites. Have a baby? Show her family photos. Point to and talk about the people in them.

Children love to hear family stories. As they listen, they learn. Every time you tell “about the time when,” your child gains a greater understanding of you, her history and culture. As your child gets older, she can participate, too. Encourage your child to retell family stories with you. Ask her questions that she can answer and talk about memories you both share, such as “Remember when we helped grandma bake a cake?”

The reality is that hearing family stories helps a child learn about language, his family and himself while also building listening skills and a love of storytelling. When he gets old enough to watch reality T.V., perhaps he’ll choose to tell his own story instead.



The History of Storytelling



What is storytelling? The National Council of Teachers of English defines storytelling as "relating a tale to one or more listeners through voice and gestures."

Most storytellers say it is an interactive process involving the teller who shares the tale and members of the audience who listen and let their imaginations take over.

"When I think of the definition of storytelling, I think of it as an event," said Shirley Raines. "There's the story, the listener and the teller. And the teller is the person who makes it an event, but only if the listener is engaged."

Why did our ancestors tell stories?

Historians say there are several reasons why storytelling has been a part of so many cultures. They believe storytelling was used to: teach history; settle arguments; make sense of the world; satisfy a need for play and entertainment; honor supernatural forces; communicate experiences to other humans; and record the actions and characteristics of ancestors for future generations.

Are traditional stories still relevant today?

Many traditional stories are very relevant to our lives today. They remind us of our history and heritage and often carry universal messages that have stood the test of time.



What are family stories and why are they important?

Family stories are tales about our immediate family members or our ancestors that help us define ourselves as individuals and as members of a family. They are told informally, for example, around the dinner table and at family gatherings, holiday celebrations, reunions, and so on.

To "go beyond the books" you receive through the Imagination Library program, check out <http://us.penguinroup.com/static/html/youngreaders/minisites/ithinkicanithinkican/fun.html>

Collecting Family Stories

Interview Questions

Family stories tell children about their family, cultural, and religious heritage, which sets the stage for healthy development and learning. They are meaningful because they are true, and, like family heirlooms, are passed from one generation to the next. Additionally, they support family communication.

How do stories help children understand themselves and relate to others? When children listen to stories, they often identify with the characters' experiences and feelings. This helps them understand their own fears, emotions, and feelings. Some stories introduce ethics and values and expand children's understanding of the world. Many times stories let children appreciate their own cultures and those of others.



What do children learn when they create their own stories? When children become storytellers they grow in many ways:

- **They learn** to put events in a sequence that makes sense.
- **They build problem solving skills** by planning how to tell the story in an engaging way.
- **Their self-confidence grows** as they take an active role in creating a story.
- **They build strong vocabularies**, learn to express their ideas clearly, and develop public speaking skills.
- **They feel important**, because they have a story to tell.

At a family gathering, take time to tell stories about the family. Or, arrange a special visiting time when an interview session can happen. Having a tape recorder available is an enjoyable way to listen to stories again.

Following are some sample interview questions. For additional interviewing hints and questions, go to <http://www.storyarts.org/classroom/roots/family.html>. More interview questions and story collecting tips can be found in an outstanding workbook, "Telling Your Own Stories," by Donald Davis.

Interview questions about life events -

- **Immigration** - When did the first family member come to America? Where did they come from? How did they get here? Are any family members still abroad?
- **Courtship** - How did you meet your spouse? How long did you know each other before you were married? Can you describe your wedding?
- **Holidays** - What were your favorite holidays? Did you have special holiday customs or foods?
- **Vacations** - Did you ever go on a vacation? Where? Who went with you? What did you do for fun?
- **Daily Life** - How did you travel from place to place? Did your family have a car? What were your favorite pastimes? How did your children behave?

Interview questions about objects -

- **Photos** - Go beyond the edges of the photo when looking at family pictures: Where was the picture taken? Who took the picture? Why were the people in the photo gathered? How are they related?
- **Jewelry** - Who wore the jewelry? Why was it given? Did it mark a special occasion?



Grandchild interviewing grandparents - When grandparents are encouraged by their grandchildren to speak about their own children when they were young, a child is offered an interesting perspective on their own parents.



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This is a special newsletter for families who are enrolled in Imagination Library.



LEARNING WITH PLAYDOUGH

The Storyteller's Creed

I believe that imagination is stronger than knowledge.

That myth is more potent than history.

That dreams are more powerful than facts.

That hope always triumphs over experience.

That laughter is the only cure for grief.

And I believe that love is stronger than death.

- Robert Fulghum

Playdough is a great pre-writing activity to help preschoolers strengthen their developing hand muscles.

PLAYDOUGH RECIPE

You will need:

- 1/2 cup salt
- 1 cup flour
- 1 tablespoon cream of tartar
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 cup water
- food coloring

What to do:

1. Combine ingredients in a saucepan. Heat gently, stirring all the time. When the dough has a good consistency, take it off the heat and allow to cool.

Don't just limit your child's playdough play to cookie cutters. Roll it, pound it, knead it, poke it with fingers, use a scissors to cut the playdough. Look in your kitchen drawer for playdough tools!

United Way of Southwest Minnesota is an independent, local organization working to create lasting changes in people's lives and the communities in Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Yellow Medicine and western Redwood Counties of Minnesota.

Learn more about United Way of Southwest Minnesota at www.unitedwayswmn.org
While you're there, sign up for our free e-newsletter

**NEW: Register for Imagination Library online at www.unitedwayswmn.org!
Also on our web page is the Parent Tool Kit - check it out!**