

Family Reading and Literacy Night

*Woodridge Primary School
Cuyaboga Falls, Ohio*

Woodridge Primary School found a way to celebrate both National Family Literacy Day and Ohio's bicentennial by organizing a school-wide Family Reading and Literacy Night. This event, attended by approximately 200 people, required the collaboration and combined talents of parents, Woodridge staff, and the University of Akron/SELF Even Start Family Literacy Program. Together, they planned an evening that included dinner and a live theatre-in-the-round performance by "Celebrate Ohio," a local children's theatre group.

As families arrived for Family Reading and Literacy Night, they registered and received a bag containing free coupons, posters, reading and writing materials, library schedules, and an age-appropriate paperback book. They were then directed by volunteer staff members to the cafeteria for a pre-show complimentary dinner. Parents and staff members served dinner and acted as hosts and greeters, while Woodridge High School students provided free babysitting in the school library for children under the age of three. Following dinner, attendants gathered in the school gym to enjoy a family sing-along, led by a second-grade parent who played guitar and led the audience in fun and familiar songs. After the songfest, the principal welcomed students and their families and announced the main event of the night, the live theatre performance. The actors performed a series of vignettes taking the audience through a timeline of Ohio's history from the Northwest Territory into the new millennium.

School and PTO funds covered the \$800 implementation costs. Community busi-

nesses and organizations donated food, paper products, and materials for the goodie bags. Publicity was handled by parents and SELF Even Start staff and included a flier that went home to all families, press releases sent to local newspapers, and promotional articles printed prior to the event. Information about the evening was posted on the district web site and printed on the yearly school calendar.

Live theatre was a new experience for many of the students and their families, and a novel way to celebrate both family literacy and Ohio's bicentennial. Students saw history and literature come to life through the theatre experience. One parent commented, "This type of thing is really good for the kids. They learn about those who have gone before us in an interesting and entertaining way."

Parents and staff at Woodridge Primary School have already begun planning a similar event for next year. To strengthen this practice, they hope to involve more teachers, staff members, and community members in its organization and implementation. They also plan to accommodate a larger number of people, so that the event can be open to any family who wants enjoy this type of learning experience.

*Rosanne Shepherd, Even Start Coordinator
(330) 926-1363
rsgeogerd@woodbridge.k12.ob.us*