



Detoxifying the developmental soil, so that developmental nutrients can do their developmental work.



ParentLink

University of Missouri

ParentLink Newsletter

SEPT 2023

Outreach

THROUGH MY LENS

Dr. Bradd Anderson, Director

This issue's theme of outreach continues to be a large priority for ParentLink. This summer has brought ParentLink's first-ever bootheel Family Fun Fests as a new way to engage families face-to-face. They started in Butler County, moved to Mississippi County and then to New Madrid, with Dunklin county's Family Fiesta closing out the summer on September 15th! On August 30, ParentLink staff joined Missouri's top elected officials and university leaders for the New Day Recovery Center's ribbon cutting in Caruthersville.



We continue to nurture relationships with Missouri's caregivers and leaders, helping families build on their strengths and resilience as we engage across multiple settings. ParentLink has been present at community events ranging from Pemiscot county's Juneteenth celebration to the Powerhouse food distributions in Columbia. Our staff have presented at conferences and gatherings of schoolteachers, counselors and nurses, county health departments, state agencies, and many more. Relationships are key to ParentLink's growing impacts, so we surround ourselves with the best partners as we work to *bolster healthy families, thriving children, and responsive developmental environments.*

ParentLink recognizes and thanks our funding sponsors!



Missouri Foundation
for Health
a catalyst for change



Family Fun Fests

Columbia's Family Fun Fests have become an annual community tradition that unites families with local organizations that can provide support. The event started in 2007, when ParentLink instituted Columbia's first Family Fun Fest in the parking lot in front of the ParentLink office. Over the years the annual Fun Fest gained in popularity and eventually outgrew its original setting. ParentLink now partners with Columbia's Parks and Recreation Department to host over forty vendors at Cosmo Park and Albert-Oakland Park.



Between May and September, Family Fun Fests take place from 6-8 p.m. on the third Wednesday of the month offering fun and free family events in the warm summer evenings. Families enjoy offerings such as live music and performances, food trucks, children's activities like bouncy houses and slides, face painting, balloon art, and hands-on interactive games and crafts, all while connecting with local community organizations and their resources.



Each month, a featured sponsor selects a unique theme, fostering both fun and education for children. From the "Bee Healthy" theme centered on positive mental health in May, to June's Juneteenth Celebration, July's "Taking Care of Yourself" health and wellness focus, the emphasis on emergency preparedness in August, and September's creativity and artistry theme, Family Fun

Fests cover a broad spectrum of community interests.

If you're in the Columbia area, join us on Wednesday, September 20 from 6-8 p.m. at Albert-Oakland Park! The theme is 'Creative Kids' and the featured sponsor is the Columbia Office of Cultural Affairs & Missouri Arts Council. Let the kids show their creative and artistic side. Hands-on kid-friendly art activities, musical performances, theater, and dance are just some of the fun to be had at the final Fun Fest of the summer.



Expanding the Fun into Southeast Missouri

ParentLink Navigators headquartered in Southeast Missouri have implemented Family Fun Fests in four "bootheel" counties for the first time this summer!



Working in collaboration with community partners, these Family Fun Fest events strive to increase awareness and access for families to services and resources. They provide a cost-free day of fun activities, which have included pony rides and bouncy houses sponsored by partner organizations.

While having many of the same features as the Columbia originals, the southeast Family Fun Fests bring their own special twists. Participants enjoy hot dogs, lemonade, popcorn, show cones, and Kinship Navigator Nan Macklin's own mix of tasty lemonade. In addition, hundreds of free food boxes are distributed to families in need at these events, to provide some assistance extending beyond the Fun Fest itself.

The calendar has brought timely themes to these events as well. The New Madrid County on Friday August 11th brought a *Back-to-School* focus, reaching a total of 507 residents with 359 back packs being given away. The southeast Fun Fest season will finish strong on September 15th in Dunklin County, celebrating Mexican Independence Day and Hispanic Heritage Month.

Key partners include MU Extension, 4-H, Fresh Start, Healthy Blue, county Health Departments, Boys & Girls Clubs of Missouri, Cricket Wireless, and the New Madrid County Family Resource Center. Any organization wishing to participate in a southeast Family Fun Fest can contact Associate Director Freda Kershaw at kershawf@missouri.edu.

Parent Cafes

ParentLink Kinship Programming in Southeast Missouri is now offering Parent Cafes to kinship caregivers. In June, ParentLink kinship staff begin partnering with the Pemiscot County Initiative Network (PIN) in Caruthersville, to provide monthly two hours meetings that engage participants in discussions around resilience and knowledge.

Participants enjoy light refreshments, and children are supervised so that caregivers can focus on the meeting.

Parent Cafes have been well attended with the meeting in June having approximately twenty kinship caregivers in attendance. As a participant,

caregivers in formal arrangements can receive two hours of training toward their foster care license each month. For more information about Parent Cafes for kinship caregivers in Southeast Missouri contact Nan Macklin, Kinship Navigator, at macklinn@missouri.edu.



Kinship Caregiver Outreach

ParentLink continues to find new ways to support kinship families in Missouri. Along with the statewide KIN-4-KID call line, individualized navigation services, and virtual and in-person group learning and support opportunities, ParentLink is collaborating with Missouri legal community members, such as Mid-Missouri Legal Services, M.A.R.C.H. Mediation, MU School of Law, attorneys, and judges to plan and host in-person informational legal clinics this fall.

Due to the nature of kinship care, many caregivers are required to interact with the legal system to acquire the legal authority to make decisions for the children in their care. This has resulted in confusion for some kinship caregivers, while others lacked the information needed to navigate this system. When children first come to live with kinship caregivers, obtaining information about adoption, guardianship, or custody is a challenge. We also know that the legal relationship between kinship caregivers and the children they are caring for greatly impacts their ability to access resources. To respond to these needs, attorneys and



family mediators will share information about legal and mediation options available to kinship caregivers at these 90-minute clinics.

In addition, ParentLink is hosting a Kinship Family Fun Day on September 9th at Stephens Lake Park in Columbia to recognize and celebrate National Kinship Care Month! There will be games, prizes, activities, crafts (for all ages), and Roary the Tiger from Bonkers will be in attendance. Families can visit with the Columbia Fire Department and explore the big red truck or get a treat from food trucks. We have also invited some of our amazing community partners, Face of Boone County, First Chance for Children and Central MO Community Action, to join this event to share their resources with families.

Letters to ParentLink

"Thank you so much for checking in with us. My daughter just got a job in a nursing home. She's really excited about the programs that are available. We have the whole family pitching in for now until we get things figured out.

I just want to say thank you for everything you did for me and my family. You gave my daughter hope for a fresh start with her new job and my grandson's wellbeing. Sometimes people don't know where to go for help and are often treated as just a number. You did not treat us like that and I'm eternally grateful. We're ready to get started and we'll keep you posted how things are going. "

March, 2023



Did You Know? ParentLink is Missouri's state affiliate for Help Me Grow, a national network helping states implement effective, universal, early childhood systems, ensuring developmental promotion for all children, and early detection, referral, and connection to services when needed.

In recognition of National Kinship Care Month



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University of Missouri



Kinship Family Fun Day

Activities • Games • Prizes

Celebrating families with children being raised
by relatives or loved ones without a parent in
the home. All are welcome!

Saturday, September 9th 10-1
Stephens Lake Park
2001 E Broadway, Columbia, MO 65201

Learn more about
ParentLink's Kinship
Navigator Program



Funded by Missouri Department of Social Services, Children's
Division, Kinship Navigator Program and Missouri Department
of Health and Senior Services.

INFORMATIONAL LEGAL CLINICS FOR KINSHIP CAREGIVERS

ParentLink will host free legal clinics for grandparents, relatives, and non-relative loved ones who are raising children when the parents cannot.

- Receive information from experts about legal options available such as guardianship and legal custody
- Receive information about family mediation
- Refreshments, child care, care packages, and door prizes provided



SEPTEMBER 20TH 10-11:30 AM
OCTOBER 18TH 1-2:30 PM
NOVEMBER 16TH 5:30-7 PM

ST. ANDREW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
914 W BOULEVARD, COLUMBIA, MO

TO REGISTER FOR A LEGAL CLINIC, SCAN
THE CODE OR CALL 833-546-4543.



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