



FAMILY NEWSLETTER

February is "I Love to Read" Month

*It is never too early to start reading to your child.
Learn about ways you can make reading fun with your child.*



- Make reading a part of your daily routines. Routines can soothe a baby, and let a baby learn to predict what will happen next. Aim to read 30 minutes with your child throughout the day.
- Read favorite stories and favorite songs over and over again. Repeated fun with books will strengthen language development and positive feelings about reading.
- Keep kid-friendly books where your child can reach them--board books, cloth, or soft plastic books are easy for infants to hold and more durable for toddlers.
- Don't expect your toddler to sit still for an entire book. They may be moving, but they are listening. Books with flaps or different textures are a great way to keep them engaged and their hands busy.
- Ask questions about what you're reading or the pictures on the pages. Take time to listen to your toddler's answers. It is okay if you don't read all the words on the page.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Through Imagination Library, your child (ages birth to 5) can sign-up to receive one free book per month in the mail. Imagination Library is available to many families across MN, but unfortunately certain zip codes are not covered.

Find out if your address makes you eligible by visiting
<https://imaginationlibrary.com/check-availability/>



Why early literacy matters - and how FHV helps!

Early literacy is more than learning to read—it's building the foundation for your child's success in school and life. When children hear stories, sing songs, and explore books from an early age, they develop language skills, imagination, and a love for learning. These experiences strengthen brain development and set the stage for future reading and writing.

Family Home Visiting (FHV) makes it easier! FHV supports parents as their child's first and most important teacher. During visits, we share fun, simple activities like reading together, talking about pictures, and playing with words—all proven to boost early literacy. We also provide tips, resources, and encouragement to make learning part of everyday family life. Plus, when parents are connected to resources, they often have less stress and have more time to focus on interacting with their child.

90% of brain
development
happens
before age 5.

Children who are read to at
least 3 times per week are
almost twice as likely to
recognize all letters by
kindergarten.

Kids with strong
early literacy skills
are 4 times more
likely to graduate
high school.



Reading Challenge with your child

- Visit a Little Free Library in your community (search locations here: <https://littlefreelibrary.org/map>)
- Find a book that rhymes and read it aloud. Using a silly voice is encouraged.
- Celebrate Valentine's Day by reading a book about love
- Celebrate Presidents' Day by reading a book about a U.S. president
- Celebrate Black History Month by reading a book written by a Black author.
- Close your eyes and run your hands along a shelf at the library. Choose any book at random and read it.
- Read a book with an animal as the main character
- Make a fort and read inside with a flashlight
- Read a book with a food in the title
- Read a book about winter



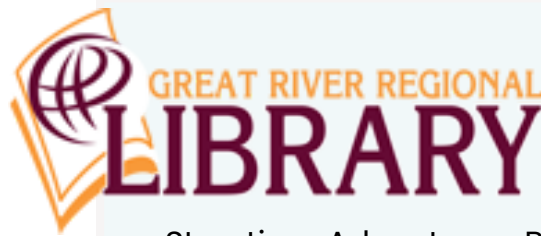
Community Spotlight: Monticello Rally To Read (Wright County)

Monticello Rally to Read empowers our community to support early literacy from birth, ensuring every child has the opportunity to succeed.

Learn more at:
<https://www.monticello.k12.mn.us/monticello-rally-to-read>



Click to read: [Monticello Times article](#)



GRRL has something for everyone in your family!

- **Storytime Adventures:** Bring your little ones for engaging story hours and hands-on activities.
- **Books for All Ages:** From board books to bestsellers, there's a perfect read for every family member.
- **Family-Friendly Events:** Enjoy craft sessions, book clubs, and seasonal programs designed to bring families together.
- **Digital Fun at Home:** Access eBooks, audiobooks, and educational games right from your devices.
- **Helpful Resources:** Homework help, job search tools, and more to support your family's needs.

Visit griver.org to find your nearest library location and check out upcoming events.



How to get a free library card

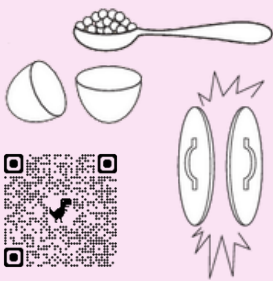
People living in Benton, Sherburne, Stearns & Wright Counties are eligible for a free GRRL card.

- Stop into one of GRRL's 32 locations; or
- Apply for an eCard online:

<https://griver.org/card-application>

Library staff will email you within 2 business days with an online-only barcode. You can upgrade to a full access card at any time by stopping into a GRRL location.

Activities of the Month



Make Your Own Instruments

https://www.readingrockets.org/sites/default/files/migrated/content/pdfs/literacybags/music_08.pdf

DIY Letter Fun: Create letters using different materials like clay, foam, or paper. Have your child form letters with playdough.



Singing songs and lullabies are great ways to introduce more words to your child in a fun way and help them get ready to read. Find a song or lullaby and make up hand movements to go along with it.



What is Reach Up Head Start?

Reach Up Head Start offers early childhood education, health, nutrition, and family support for children birth to age 5. Their goal is to help children thrive and prepare for school while supporting parents.

Programs Offered:

- Head Start (Birth–3 years): Home-based visits and family support.
- Head Start Preschool (3–5 years): Center-based classrooms with qualified teachers.
- Family Services: Resources for housing, employment, health, and parenting.

Eligibility

- Families with children birth to age 5.
- Income-based (most families qualify if they meet federal poverty guidelines).
- Children in foster care, experiencing homelessness, or receiving public assistance (TANF, SSI) are automatically eligible.

Find your Reach Up Head Start program

- Benton, Sherburne, Stearns County residents:
<https://reachupinc.org/programs/head-start/>
- Wright County residents:
https://wccaweb.com/Program/Head_Start

Pregnant women can also receive prenatal support through Early Head Start.

- Benton, Sherburne, Stearns County residents:
<https://reachupinc.org/programs/early-head-start/>
- Wright County residents:
https://wccaweb.com/Program/Early_Head_Start

First Steps Fun Facts



We asked staff to name a proud moment from 2025. These are a few of the themes we heard. Thank you, families, for your trust!

- Seeing families succeed and be proud of themselves.
- Relationship-building (parents with their home visitor, parents with their child, parents and home visitors with community resources)
- Having clients refer their friends and family members to our program
- Families graduating from the program
- Knowing I am a trusted person in the life of a family
- Our team's resilience and ability to bring their best selves into homes
- Empowering parents. Seeing parents gain confidence and trust in themselves after overcoming significant challenges.
- The innovation, creativity, and collaboration with our community health worker
- Growing lactation support in the community
- It felt good to hear that the presence we give our families helps them to feel supported, heard, and capable of making decisions that are best for them, and not judged.

Drop-In Feeding Support

Tuesdays

- 10a–12p, Monticello Community Center
- 9:30a–11:30a, St. Cloud YMCA 

Wednesdays

- 9:30a–11:30a, Wright County Historical Society, Buffalo 
- 1:30p–3p, Maple Grove Hospital

Thursdays

- 10a–12p, Mainstreet Family Resource Center, Elk River 
- 11a–12:30p, Cambridge-Isanti Adult Enrichment Center

Fridays

- 10a–12p, Options for Women –Cornerstone, St. Michael



=First Steps staff present

Mindfulness Moment

Self-love affirmations

- I am worthy of love and respect, just as I am.
- I choose to treat myself with kindness and compassion.
- My value is not defined by others' opinions.
- I honor my feelings and trust my inner wisdom.
- I am enough, and I celebrate who I am becoming.
- I deserve peace, joy, and unconditional love.
- I release self-criticism and embrace self-acceptance.





We asked our home visitors what their favorite children's books were & here is what they said:

Favorite authors

Dr. Seuss

- Oh, The Places You Will Go / ¡Oh, cuán lejos llegarás!
- Fox in Socks

Sandra Boynton

- Belly Button Book! / ¡El libro del ombligo!
- Barnyard Dance! / ¡Danza del corral!
- Snuggle Puppy / Cachorro cariñoso
- Buenos Noches a Todos / The Going to Bed Book
- Anything

Margaret Wise Brown

- Goodnight Moon / Buenas noches, Luna
- Big Red Barn / El gran granero rojo

Charles Ghigna

- Numbers at the Park
- Alphabet Parade
- The Wonders of the Color Wheel

Laurel Porter-Gaylord

- I Love My Mommy Because... / Quiero a mi Mama Porque...
- I Love my Dadd Because... / Quiero a mi Papa Porque...

Favorite book series

Otis the Tractor - Loren Long

Don't Push the Button! / ¡No Aprietes el Botón! - Bill Cotter

Llama Llama Red Pajama / La Llama Llama rojo pijama - Anna Dewdney

Little Blue Truck / El camioncito Azul - Alice Schertle

If You Give a Mouse a Cookie / Si le das una galletita a un ratón - Laura Joffe Numeroff

Other favorites

- The Kissing Hand / Un Beso en Mi Mano - Audrey Penn
- The Mitten / El mitón - Jan Brett
- Are You My Mother? / ¿Eres tú mi mamá? - P.D. Eastman
- Corduroy - Don Freeman
- The Invisible String / El hilo invisible - Patrice Karst
- Tiny T. Rex & the Impossible Hug / Mini T. Rex y el abrazo imposible - Jonathan Stutzman
- Dream Big Little Pig / ¡ Sueña a lo grande Amapola! - Kristi Yamaguchi
- Giraffes Can't Dance - Giles Andreae
- Click Clack Moo: Cows That Type / Clic, Clac, Muu: Vacas escritoras - Doreen Cronin
- I Love You Like No Otter - Rose Rossner
- Nibbles: The Book Monster / El libro de los monstruos - Emma Yarlett
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar / La oruga muy hambrienta - Eric Carle
- My Love for You / Mi Amor Por Ti - Susan L Roth
- The Napping House / La casa adormecida - Audrey Wood
- Guess How Much I Love You / Adivina cuánto te quiero - Sam McBratney
- The Bear Snores On / Oso no para de roncar by Karma Wilson
- The Jolly Postman by Janet & Allan Ahlberg

Recommended by multiple staff

- Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin Jr
- Love You Forever by Robert Munsch
- The Gruffalo by Julia Donaldson
- One Duck Stuck by Phyllis Root
- Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by Bill Martin Jr & John Archambault
- The Pout-Pout Fish by Deborah Diesen
- The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein
- Pouch! by David Ezra Stein



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4TH
10:00AM-1:00PM
JOIN US FOR A FUN MORNING OF
VALENTINES CRAFTS AND CONNECTION!

Caregivers and little ones are invited to join First Steps Central for a fun morning of crafts designed to build connection, creativity, and community!

We will be making Valentine's cards and Crafts together.

The event is free and open to all!

MAIN STREET FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER
400 JACKSON AVE NW
ELK RIVER, MN 55330



Additional location...same great fun!



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20TH 10:00AM-12:00PM
JOIN US FOR A FUN MORNING OF VALENTINES CRAFTS AND
CONNECTION!

Caregivers and little ones are invited to join First Steps Central for a fun morning of crafts designed to build connection, creativity, and community!

We will be making Valentine's cards and Crafts together.

The event is free and open to all! Drop ins are welcome anytime!

10-10 Community Outpost
1114 9TH AVE SE St Cloud MN
56301



Diaper Club

Join us once a month at the
Family Resource Center for our
Diaper Club — a supportive
event where you can pick up
FREE diapers for your family!

400 Jackson Ave NW
Elk River, MN 55330



February 4, 2026 @ 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Join us once a month at the Family Resource Center for our
Diaper Club — A supportive resource for families!

**Location: Elk River Family Resource Center 400 Jackson Ave NW
Elk River, MN 55330**

***Note:** Big Lake families can also request pick up from Liberty
Elementary by sending a request in advance. Please email
shari.ley@mainstreetfamilyservices.org for more information.

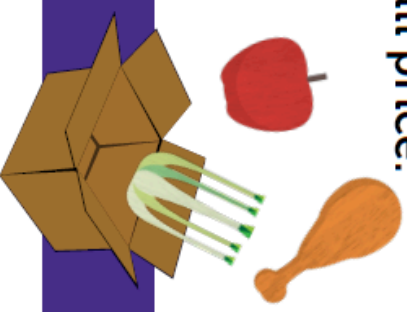


Fare For All

**Get packs of fresh produce and frozen
meats up to 40% off of retail price.**

All are welcome, no questions asked

Fare For All is a program of The Food Group, a nonprofit sharing
food today and making change for tomorrow.



Grocery pack sales:

Mega Meat Pack \$25

6 - 8 hard frozen meat items
(chicken, turkey, pork, beef,
and/or fish)

Hot BUY specials

Monthly deals on items
or seasonal packs

Mini Meat Pack \$11

3 - 5 hard frozen meat
items (pork free)

Produce Pack \$10

6 - 8 types of fresh fruits and
vegetables

**SCAN to
find a site
near you**



\$ we accept:



thefoodgroupmn.org/groceries @fareforall 763-450-3880



2026 WINTER / SPRING ECFE classes

Early Childhood Family Education

isd742.org/ECFE

Parent Child Classes

Register now! Enroll anytime!

- Parents are the child's first and most important teacher.
- We provide quality learning opportunities and resources for parents and children.
- Parents and children attend together.
- For parents and children birth to kindergarten entry. (0 - 5 years.)
- A sliding fee scale is used to determine cost for classes. (We do **not turn anyone away due to an inability to pay**)



Scan for registration

St. Cloud Area
School District Early Childhood

ISD742_Early_Childhood

Quarryview Education Center

800 7th St. S., Waite Park, MN 56387 (320) 370-8250

St. Cloud Area
School District

ECFE Class Schedule					WINTER/SPRING 2026	
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	11/21/25	
9:00-11:00 am 2s: 24-36 mo	9:00-11:00 am Toddlers 12-24 mo	9:00-11:00 am Toddlers 18-24 mo	10:00-11:30 am Baby Talk: 0-12 mo (Free, Drop-In)	9:00-11:00 am Toddlers 12-24 mo	9:00-11:00 am Art, Music, Science 3s & 4s	
9:00-11:00 am Family Time 0-5 yrs	9:00-11:00 am Family Literacy 0-5 yrs	9:00-11:00 am Family Time 0-5 yrs	9:00-11:00 am Family Time 0-5 yrs	9:00-11:00 am Family Time 0-5 yrs	9:00-11:00 am Family Time 0-5 yrs	
12:00-1:30 pm Infants 0-12 mo	12:00-1:30 pm Family Time 0-5 yrs	12:00-2:00 pm Family Time 0-5 yrs	12:00-1:30 pm Infants 0-12 mo	12:00-2:00 pm Outdoor Nature 18 mo - 4 yrs (Apr & May)	12:00-2:00 pm ECFE Open Gym 0-5 yrs (3s), Drop-In (Jan, Feb, March)	
12:00-1:45 pm 2s & 3s 24-48 mo	4:30-6:00 pm 742 Teachers 0-5 yrs	12:00-1:30 pm Way To Grow	12:00-1:45 pm Explore, Play, Learn 3s & 4s			
12:00-1:45 pm Bharaninda Dhaqamada Dhan 0-5 sano (oo leh turjuba)						
5:30-7:00 pm Infants 0-12 mo		5:30-7:00 pm Crianza entre culturas 0-5 años (con intérprete de español) (Jan. 28 - Mar 25)	5:30-7:00 pm Toddlers 12-24 mo	RUN & READ Ages 1-5 yrs 9:30-11:30 a.m. January 24 February 21 March 14 FREE Fun time in the gym, story time & snack		
5:30-7:00 pm 2s & 3s 24-48 mo		5:30-7:00 pm ZSLGBRQA+ 0-5 yrs (Apr 8-May 27)	4:30-6:00 pm Family Time 0-5 yrs			
5:30-7:00 pm Family Time 0-5 yrs						

Child's age: as of September 1st, 2025

3 ways to register!

1. QR code (front page)
2. Call (320) 370-8250
3. In-person at Quarryview Education Center

Spring Fling
Tuesday, May 12
5-7 pm
For birth to
Kindergarten entry
Free Spring Theme Activities

Super Saturdays
for Dads & Children
9:30-11:30 am
1/10, 2/7, 3/14,
4/11, 4/25