



Whole Child: Connecting for Kids

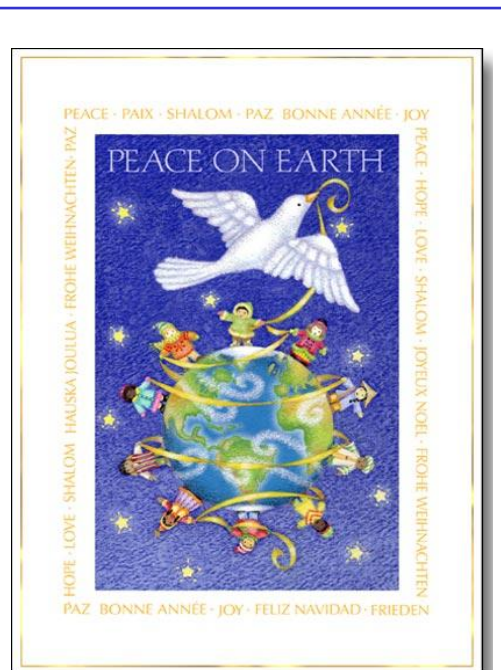
*A Happy New Year to all Whole Child Partners!
The Whole Child Manatee thanks you for your support!*

In these difficult times we hope that you find the Whole Child Connection full of useful resources for your families, staff and friends. Completion of the Profile identifies family needs and provides easier access to services such as child care, housing, parenting education, pediatricians, free tax prep sites and lots of ways to get involved in community activities.

We are excited to announce that with the Support of the Lawton Chiles Foundation Whole Child Manatee has a brand new website:

www.wholechildmanatee.com

Take a look and see what all the excitement is about.



As we close the last decade, we are proud that there is great news to report! Despite the economic challenges in our country, the impact of Whole Child's work has been felt far and wide by children and families in need. We thank all our partners and wish you safe and peaceful holiday season



REMEMBER: It's a great idea to empower families by having internet access available to them at your location! You can assist families, staff and friends in getting all of the resources they need by having a computer available for their use.

Some possibilities:

***Whole Child Connection-**

Over 300 Resources for families & children 0-6

www.wholechildmanatee.com

***KidCare-**Health Insurance

for kids under age 19

www.floridakidcare.org

***ACCESS-**Automated

Community Connection to Economic Self-Sufficiency, Food Stamps, Temporary Cash assistance & Medicaid

www.myflorida.com/accessflorida

***IRS-**free tax filing for

families @ www.irs.gov . Look for the "Free File" link.

Another Successful Screening

On November 18, the Early Success Community Developmental Screening for children five and younger took place at Samoset Elementary School for the third time. Our thanks to Principal Scott Boyes for his gracious hospitality.

Under the umbrella of Whole Child, eight community partners took fourteen children through the screening process. The families who participated at Samoset benefited from interdisciplinary screening that was designed to determine each child's strengths and evaluate any developmental challenges. Families expressed pleasure with the professional approach and recognized the importance of early developmental screenings in identifying and responding to the individual needs of their children.

Screenings focus on hearing, vision, developmental wellness, social and emotional health and gross and fine motor skills. Funding for the Initiative is provided through a grant from Early Success Program at State College of Florida. The Initiative is a collaborative effort of Whole Child Manatee Partners. For more information on future screenings please call Pat Johnson at 749-3059



A Few Ways to Teach Children Christmas Spirit

Most people love the [Christmas](#) season, [children](#) especially. It's hard for them not to be greedy when relatives keep asking them to name the toys and [electronics](#) they want. The true spirit of [Christmas](#), the birth of Christ, the heart-warming feeling of giving to those not as fortunate as themselves, and just being kind to one another, gets overlooked. Parents and adults can teach kids the true Christmas spirit without removing the gift-giving factor.

- ♥ Practice what you preach. Children watch your actions and day to day interactions even more than they listen to your words. If you show the true Christmas spirit--gratitude, charity, faith and forgiveness--in front of them in your daily routine, so will they, even when you are not around.
- ♥ Talk with your family, not at

them, about what Christmas means to each one of them personally. Some may speak of faith, others the warm feeling of being together as a family, and others just dig the gifts. There is no wrong answer, as it is what they truly feel, and it gives you an idea of what to emphasize.

- ♥ Spend some time volunteering with your family. Helping serve food at the local church soup kitchen or sorting donations at a Christmas donation center is a great way to show your own children that some people are not as fortunate as they are.
- ♥ Include the kids, young and old in the decorating and celebrating traditions. Letting them take part allows them to enjoy the events rather than dreading something else they can't partake in.
- ♥ Tell the children your view on the true Christmas Spirit and then have

Check Out the Community Calendar

www.wholechildmanatee.com/News-Events/Manatee-Meeting-Calendar

Contact Kim Ross with your meeting dates and events for publishing on the

Whole Child Website:

rossk@fc.manatee.k12.fl.us



Remember the Housekeeping

Please go into your Whole Child program description page and make sure info is updated for the New Year! Make sure to send us a list of upcoming events and meetings for our calendar and events page!! Check for service requests on a regular basis, you may not always receive e-mail notification. **And please** feel free to contact us if you need additional assistance or information.

them make a list of what they are grateful for before making the list of what they want for Christmas and have everyone share both lists over hot cocoa or dinner. Say a prayer together at the end of the evening or event; it is the perfect way to wrap it up. This is a great tradition to start as soon as the children are talking.

- ♥ Show your true Christmas spirit to those you know and love. Invite family, friends and neighbors, especially those who don't have anyone to spend the [holidays](#) with, for a potluck to celebrate the good fortune of being in each others' lives. No gifts are necessary to show your love and appreciation for these good people.



Surviving the **SQUEEZE** I & II Re-Energizing Connections in Tough Times



Whole Child Manatee has hosted two “Surviving the Squeeze “ workshops, focusing on resources available in our community and on the Whole Child website. Presentations were given by 14 different organizations that included multi resource centers and financial stability information. Both workshops were well attended—130 in total--and surveys showed that all were pleased with the information sharing. For more on future workshops contact us at 749-3059.

Remember! It's Worth \$\$\$ to WAIT.

As the Holiday season starts to speed up, it is a tough time in the year to deal with less income and the pressure we all face—wanting to give the children in our lives a joyful and happy holiday experience. Many families are tempted to cash in on their annual income tax refund, which for some includes the benefit of the Earned Income Tax Credit for hard working families. It's especially hard to turn down what sounds like a great deal in some so-called gift card or Refund Anticipation Loan (RAL) instruments offered by big name tax preparers. They can entice you with what seems like an easy way to get your tax refund in late December. No matter what they call it though, they are essentially locking you into a high interest loan against your own money. You will probably end up paying several hundred dollars or more in interest on top of the tax preparation fees for what is essentially a short term loan offered at a very high interest rate that often approaches 700% APR!

“Jeffrey” on the SavingAdvice.com blog expressed it so well when he wrote:

“When you think about it, these refund anticipation loans don't make much financial sense. The

reason that you are receiving the income tax refund in the first place is because you have been loaning the money to the government for the entire year at no charge. After letting the government use this money for free, *you pay triple digit interest rate fees to get your own money a few weeks earlier at most.*” From www.savingadvice.com/forums/taxes/ Beware and think about your options.



Plan Ahead

Whole Child Manatee has been involved in Volunteer Income Tax Assistance—FREE|Tax-- since 2007 and will be organizing sites with other community partners again this year for families and individuals who make less than \$49,000 annually. All FREE|Tax sites use electronic filing with IRS trained and certified volunteers. Electronic filing is secure and fast; combined with direct deposit, the time frame for getting your refund is no more than 7 to 10 business days.

Plan to go to a FREE|Tax site and you won't have to pay for preparation—saving from \$100 to \$200. Never mind what you save in heartache and hard earned cash when you avoid the cost of a refund “deal” with the franchise paid preparers.

There are twelve permanent FREE|Tax sites in the county open for the entire tax season. There is also the Suncoast FREE|Tax Mobile (computer lab) which is scheduled for the month of February throughout Palmetto and Bradenton. Call the United Way community helpline anytime after mid-January to **find the FREE|Tax site most convenient to you; just dial 2-1-1 or (941) 308-4357.**

If you are comfortable online, you can also use low to no cost tax software available on the internet. A wide array of options is offered through www.irs.gov. Look for the Free File link or enter “free file” in the search box—upper right hand corner. If you want some financing and insurance tips, as well as free tax filing, try www.thebeehive.org/money.

