

## Clarkston Partners Engage Children and Their Families in Learning

By Roberta Malavenda, Executive Director, CDF Action

**M**y child learns to get along with others and enjoys coming to the READY School. His attending the program has made a difference. He is “ready” to go to Pre-K now,” said one of the mothers at the first year anniversary celebration and open house for the Clarkston READY School, a free part day early learning and family engagement program located in the Clarkston Oaks Apartments and staffed by multi-lingual teachers from the Scottdale Early Learning, Inc.

During the open house, a teacher printed a three year old’s name using chalk on the walk way outside the READY School. The little boy took a piece of chalk and began to make large straight lines similar to the ones in his name, smiled because he was proud of himself, and then went to join his friends.

Learning and fun, lots of language, stories and songs in multiple languages, and making new friends happens at the READY School, attended by 3 and 4 year olds from Somalia, Syria, Burma, and Iraq. The READY School, funded by United Way of Greater Atlanta, is an initiative of CDF Action, in partnership with Scottdale Early Learning, Inc., R. James Property Management, and Early Learning Property Management. Watch for the opening of a second Clarkston READY School this fall in the City of Clarkston!



Learning is also fun at Indian Creek Elementary School. This spring, parents, teachers, community representatives, and youth worked on a Welcoming Mural Project. The mural was unveiled at a small ceremony in front of the school, where the mural now hangs for all to see.

The mural project was sponsored by CDF Action. Families and teachers were invited to a meeting to discuss ideas that would benefit the school, and the welcoming mural is the resulting art piece from that consensus. Shannon Willow,

Clarkston artist, was invited to present a design for the mural ...a welcoming tree. The group identified and prioritized over 40 words that described Indian Creek Elementary School values, words like learning, do your best, quality, feliz (happy in Spanish) and Namaste (welcome in Nepali). The words became the trunk of the tree. Art teacher Zully Conde and her students helped paint the mural and added their own touches – flowers and bumble bees ---to the design.

Thank you to principal Dr. Antonette Campbell for her leadership and to the teaching staff members, families, and youth at Indian Creek Elementary School who participated in the project. A special

thanks to City of Clarkston Council members Beverly Burks and Dean Moore, who joined us for the unveiling ceremony.

The READY School and the Indian Creek Elementary School Mural Project are the result of residents and partners coming together, transforming ideas into actions, creating community processes and projects that make a difference.