

National Indian Head Start Directors Association 19th Management Training Conference, Oklahoma City, OK: Parent Interview: Hilda Marshall and Family

(links for viewing and download at end of transcript)

Jarma Wrighten: So today I have one of my favorite families. This is Miss Hilda. And I'm going to have Hilda to tell - to -- introduce everyone that she's brought with her today.

Hilda Marshall: Hello, my name is Hilda Marshall, and this is my great-granddaughter, Anavay Fisher, and my husband, Hap Marshall. And we're from the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation in Eagle Butte, South Dakota. And my granddaughter, we keep her at least 75 percent of the time.

She considers our home her home. And when she goes home, she'll spend time with her mother and little brother, and then -- then when she gets tired she'll call and ask us to come and get her. And there are times at night when we couldn't go get her 'cause we live 43 miles away, then I'd read her a story over the telephone so she could go to sleep.

Jarma: Awww. That's... Hilda: So... Jarma: That is the sweetest grandmother story. You read it over the telephone. Hilda: Yes.

Jarma: So Anavay was in Head Start last year when I met Anavay, and she told me today that now she's in kindergarten, and she also shared some of the things she's already learned. But now that you have shared that, you know, you did the stories over the phone, what are some other things that you all do to spend your together-times with her that helped her to learn and grow so that she transitioned smoothly into the kindergarten program?

Hilda: Oh, she graduated last year from the Cheyenne Eagle Butte Center. Then she went on into kindergarten and her maturity level wasn't equal to the others that were older than her by several months. And so in attending her parent-teacher conferences, they informed us that she was a little behind and that she needed to have some work done with her. She had to count to a hundred; she had to be able to identify alphabets by reading a paper or -- or a storybook.

And so we wanted her to pass and -- because we know what it's like to be held back. And so we'd be driving down the highway and we'd pull over to the side and we'd ask Anavey, "Anavey, can you count how many cows are in the pasture?" So she'd sit there and count for us. Or when she'd be reading a book, looking at one, I'd ask her to point out what a A or a C or F is, and she'd show me.

And she's starting to identify her letters and trying to sound out her words, and... I try to read to her, and her grandpa tries to read to her as much as she -- we can. And she has a large vocabulary and can talk, you know, fluently with adults better than she can with children her age. So she has good articulation, and she keeps us entertained. She makes us laugh sometimes. She comes up with some of the craziest little wordings.

Jarma: Well, I know now that she's gotten to that point, and you've been such a support -- both of you have been such a great support for her that she's developed quite well, because you said you would pull over on the side, and then she learned her numbers, and she shared those numbers with me today. So I know now that she's really counting and articulating because I heard her. If you had to say one thing about Head Start and the way that Head Start supports her and your involvement in Head Start, what would it be?

Hilda: She learned a lot when she went in as far as her numbers and alphabets, her shapes and colors. We tried to encourage her to learn more, and we have flashcards they gave us that we worked with her with, like in the evenings or on weekends. We also got her some games -- V-Tech games and... Head Start taught her how to socialize with other children, because she only has her little brother and -- and so she learned that at school. She learned how to speak her Lakota language. She knows a lot of words and...

Hap Marshall: Socializing with other children... Hilda: Yes, that's what I said. Jarma: Yep, so that socialization was a big help from being in Head Start... Hilda: Right.

Jarma:...because that's one of the things that Head Start really implements well -- that all children come in and they learn to play, they interact with one another. When they see their peers you automatically will pick up from your other little friends, and so she is very sociable.

And she shared that with how she has learned to adapt to adults as well, and that's a good thing. If you had to give parents words of advice or encouragement about teaching their children in the home or being a supportive grandparent, or a supportive parent, what kinds of words would you share with them or what would you tell them?

Hilda: I would tell them to enroll their children in Head Start because Head Start has a lot of things to offer. They screen them for their dental, vision, hearing. They test them on their cognitive, motor skills, and it gives them a "head start" and prepare them for school. They also provide nutritious meals for them in the morning and at noon, and then they have a snack. They have socialization, little parties and such, and they're learning every day something new.

And she enjoyed Head Start. And parent participation is very important, and that's something they have in Head Start. They can come in and volunteer. They gain "in kind" points when they're working with their child, and it helps the parents grow, too. You know, they learn to appreciate education because they may be a single mother that dropped out of school...

...but after seeing their child in Head Start and knowing, you know, what the outcomes would be in getting their education, they're starting to go back and getting their GED, you know, pursuing college classes and a career. So Head Start -- I think every community should have a Head Start.

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-- Premalink for viewing (requires Flash and javascript)

<http://videos.sorensonmedia.com/HEAD+START/000135-Hilda+and+Family+Parent+Interview-2009-SD360p/d605d17cda41234761A9af7Q5478a1d58e12>