

## **Head Start and Central R-III ECSE Programs Work Together to Help Family**

By Renee Bertrand, Head Start Parent



I am a 38-year-old divorced mother of 4 children. I became familiar with the Head Start program when my son, Taylor, attended Bonne Terre Head Start. Taylor is now 13 so it's been 10 years since I had a child in Head Start. I have a 5-year-old son named Job who now attends Mid-St. Francois County Head Start. Job has been a student since he was 3. Job was a premature baby and has a developmental disability. He struggles with comprehension, but most with verbal speech and language. I've always been concerned about Job since the pediatrician said he may have a developmental disability. When I enrolled Job in Head Start, it was difficult and at times impossible to understand what he was saying, even worse was his inability to understand what was being said to him.

For the first time in Job's 5 years of life, I no longer worry about his development. Job can count, sing his alphabet, spell his name, he answers questions with an appropriate response and you can now understand him when he speaks. Job is also more sociable with other kids. All of this is due to his two years in Head Start and Central R-III School District's Early Childhood classes. Both programs are in the same building so that it was very convenient for Job to get the education he needed. The teachers and staff for Head Start treat Job and the other children with love and patience. I was concerned with Job starting kindergarten next year. I was afraid he was not ready enough academically to handle the social change as well. However, his Early Childhood teacher explained to me that Job learns better with a firmer hand. Job has come so far so quickly and I have learned a lot about my son's disabilities and how to help him learn.

Head Start has also been a positive influence on myself as well. I became chairperson of the parenting committee and I am also a Policy Council Parent Representative. It has built-up my self-confidence to become so active in Job's education.

The people involved in the Head Start and Early Childhood programs have always made me feel welcomed and worthy. They listen to any ideas I may have to improve the programs. Not only do they listen to my concerns, but they also put into action any steps necessary to put my mind at ease. The monthly home visits from the Family Advocate encourage me to set and achieve goals for my family. Head Start has been such a positive influence on my family that I want to stay involved on some level, perhaps as a volunteer.