



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
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April 2009 – PA One Book Early Literacy Initiative

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Have you ever read about inside mice and outside mice – or about a polar bear and a goose that were splendid friends – or about vegetables growing up, down and all around? If you recognize these themes, then you have already participated in PA One Book, Every Young Child. This important program, now in its fourth year, stresses the importance of early literacy activities and each year highlights an exceptional picture book for young children. With support from Smart Start-Centre County, many libraries, schools, child care sites, physicians' offices, Care Partnership Communities That Care, and other agencies connected with children will be participating in this year's PA One Book activities which will begin in April.

The 2009 selection is entitled *If You Were a Penguin* by Florence and Wendell Minor. This brand new book lets children use their imaginations as they step inside a penguin's world. Did you know that Emperor Penguins can be four feet tall – the height of a five year old child? Were you aware that penguins can sleep standing up, sitting in water, lying down, or even perched in a tree? Facts such as these are fascinating to young children, and non-fiction picture books can convey lots of factual information to a child in a playful way. What better time to begin sharing facts with a child about their world than when the word "why" is part of every conversation.

The One Book, Every Young Child program goes far beyond just giving parents and caregivers a book to read to preschoolers. The program's design is based on studies showing that simply reading a book is not enough. Adults and caregivers must find ways to engage children in activities like talking about a book's cover and illustrations, discussing the action in the book and favorite parts or engaging in pretend play related to the book. These story-stretching activities have been shown to be crucial to early learning and are a simple and fun way that young children are prepared and ready to learn when they begin school.

If you are adult with a child in your life, you don't have to have a degree in early childhood education to provide these interactions. You can simply follow the child's interests or go to www.paonebook.org to find an excellent list of resources and suggestions to make *If You Were a Penguin* an effective, interactive read-aloud story as well as an activity guide with ideas for further play.

You can find Pennsylvania Penguins this year – and not just the hockey team! Centre County Commissioners declared April Penguin Pals Month in support of early literacy efforts. Schlow Centre Region Library in State College is offering an on-line April book club entitled Penguin Pals and you can find information at www.schlowlibrary.org. Be part of the literacy celebration and come to Schlow Library on April 28 at 7:00pm to meet author and illustrator Florence and Wendell Minor and ask your own questions about penguins.

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During the month of April, Smart Start-Centre County will host a "One Book" project to promote early literacy. Volunteers, including community members, coaches, and legislators, will read the book *Up, Down, and Around* by Katherine Ayres to children in early education programs across Centre County. After the reading, children will participate in interactive finger plays and a craft project where they plant pea seeds.

Up, Down, and Around is a beautifully illustrated picture book (by illustrator Nadine Bernard Westcott) for children ages 3 to 6 and is the 2008 selection for the Pennsylvania Library Association's "One Book, Every Young Child" project. The book shows which vegetables grow up (ex. corn, broccoli), grow down (ex. beets, onions), and grow around and around (ex. pumpkins, green beans).

The "One Book" project not only fosters early literacy, but it also teaches children about science and encourages imaginative play.