

## Speaker: Play is an academic foundation

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a representative of Educational Service Unit No. 9.

ESU No. 9 funded the workshops using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds. This way, the event was free to participants.

About 75 early childhood educators attended during the afternoon, in which Murphy shared her philosophy of education. She also gave educators who use play in their classrooms language tools to explain themselves to skeptics.

"Too many people still think that, if children are playing, there's not any learning going on," she said.

"If I'm doing Play-Doh and I have a parent or a co-worker or a boss who's concerned as to why kindergartners are still doing Play-Doh, I taught them this afternoon a little bit of the language that you can link to the Play-Doh. We call it 'What to say when the wolves come knocking.'"

Certain people resonate with certain types of language when educators are explaining their reasons for, say, using Play-Doh instead of flash cards in a classroom.

"So, if I'm able to talk about spatial skill development and patterning and cooperation and estimating and gravity and science and start linking some of that language to what we're already doing in a classroom, there's a certain group of people who then 'get it,' for lack of a better phrase," Murphy said.

Many of Murphy's workshop topics are focused on specific play activities that parents and educators can use with children. However, her focus is not on the activities but on the time parents are spending with their children, and on the need for educators to remember why they are educators.

"My overarching goal is to make sure that the people who are working with the kids know why they get up every day and do it," she said. "I'm very much an advocate of what we call 'intentional teaching.'"

Mary said this message validates what educators are already doing in Nebraska. Murphy uses the term "crystallized moments" to describe a learning experience that the child won't forget, Mary said. Educators are encouraged by the reminder that they impact children's lives.

"Sometimes we do something to some child, and it will take years and years and years before we know the difference. And that's why most teachers are in education, because they want to make that difference," Mary said.

Learn more about Murphy at her Web site, [www.ooneygooney.com](http://www.ooneygooney.com).

## Death: Family sues county for negligence

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"We believe Mr. Hatcher's death was a tragedy," Waite said. "We do not see a basis to hold Lincoln County or any of its employees liable for that tragedy."

Representatives of the city and hospital did not immediately respond to messages Thursday seeking comment on the lawsuit.

Lincoln County sheriff's officials have said Hatcher hung himself inside his cell in June 2008. He died several days later at a hospital.

A grand jury investigated Hatcher's death and decided no criminal charges were warranted in the case.

Lincoln County Sheriff Jerome Kramer said after Hatcher's death that his staff did everything it could to save Hatcher's life.

## UNL Master Gardener training starts soon

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Volunteers are being sought for the 2010 University of Nebraska Extension Master Gardener Program.

The program extends the outreach of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in Adams County by training volunteers with research-based horticulture education. This training

prepares Master Gardeners to share their knowledge with other citizens of the area. The Adams County Master Gardener Program currently has 12 active participants.

Volunteers who participate in the March Master Gardener program will receive 40 hours of educational training. Participants then are asked to commit 40 hours of volunteer time follow-

ing the training within the initial growing season.

Returning volunteers commit 30 hours of volunteer time, said Don Siffring, extension horticulture aide in Adams County.

Training is scheduled to begin in early March. Classes are conducted three days per week from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the second and third weeks of

March beginning on March 8. Training will be held at the Hall County Extension meeting room at College Park in Grand Island.

Master Gardener volunteers retain their certification through training and volunteering. A training fee is charged for initial and returning volunteers.

The Master Gardener

Program exposes participants to horticultural subjects including turf care, tree and shrub care, fruits, flowers, vegetables, disease and insect control, pesticide and chemical use as well as other topics. UNL Plant Science and related topic staff provide for the training.

For more information, call the Adams County Extension Office, 402-461-7209.

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