**Director’s News**

**Dear Parent,**

We are all looking forward to the coming of spring! The children cannot wait to get back on the playground once it dries up after all of the recent rain and snow. The children and teachers from all the rooms went on walks several times last week when the weather was warmer.

We also had a fire drill recently. I was grateful for the break in the cold temperatures. Were you aware that we practice our fire emergency drills monthly? Curt Tate from Environmental Health and Safety conducts the drill. He and I coordinate the time, but the teachers and children do not know until the alarm goes off. The children are very comfortable with the drills and do their part willingly. Several Public Safety officers come to help. (They are not notified in advance either.) One will block the driveway with a vehicle and others make a sweep through the building to make sure everyone is out. We are regularly out of the building in under two minutes and occasionally we are out in one minute. Everyone goes into the Public Safety Building. The staff there is delighted to see the children.

Soon we will also practice tornado drills. In that case everyone moves to the kitchen which is our tornado shelter. There is a weather radio in the infant room to alert us of a tornado warning. Public Safety also calls to make sure we have heard the warning.

Connie

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**Further Thoughts on Play**

David Elkind, noted professor of Child Development at Tufts University and author of more than a dozen books about childhood was interviewed in the Washington Post on January 29. A few quotes from the article speak of the essential role play has in the development of children.

“Children who are not given the opportunity to engage in unscheduled activities don’t exercise and nourish their creativity, their imagination, their fantasy. ...Children need to experience things they can touch and hold, not watch somebody else do it. There is no other way they can learn without experience. There is a lot of learning that goes on in spontaneous play that kids can’t get in any other way. And that is what worries me about the over programming, over scheduling, over attention to media.”

“Young children take more time to process information. That’s why children dawdle. Everything is so interesting to them. They go over a story many, many times. Each time they go over a story they are learning something new. It’s boring to us but not to a little child. They are not little sponges. It’s a terrible misunderstanding about how children learn, and you do more harm than good when you pour everything in there.”

To read more, look for “The Power of Play,” Elkind’s latest book. The Center has one of his books, “The Hurried Child,” available for loan to parents.
Infant Room News

Today is sunny and warm, but what will tomorrow bring? We have enjoyed taking walks and getting out in the fresh air. The older infants are becoming quite the artists. Our walls are decorated with their masterpieces. Some of their favorite activities have included: Coloring on coffee filters with crayons and markers to make colorful snowflakes (no two are alike!). They also made Valentines by dipping a cookie cutter heart in paint and stamping it on paper. They were amazed to see the pretty hearts on the paper, some couldn’t even resist touching them. Another fun activity has been coloring with colored chalk. They are so excited to see all the colors. Some of their papers, when completed, have very little white showing. Watch for a paper quilt to go up on the wall in the sleeping pod.

The younger infants have new accomplishments to share. Ethan is now exploring the room on his hands and knees. What fun it is to be on the move! Noah and Gavin enjoy sitting on the floor at playtime. Aubrey and Sarah enjoy watching the kids while in the saucer. Everyday the younger infants have tummy time. It is very important for the infants to have tummy time. Laura Plank, an orthotist, said “The child becomes accustomed to being on their back. All they have to do is open their eyes and the world comes to them. When they are on their tummy, they have to lift their head against gravity, and that’s work.” The babies may cry but that is okay. If you have any questions or concerns about this or any other matter, feel free to talk to me at any time.

We have welcomed a new infant into our room. Sarah Romero is the daughter of Tony and Laura Romero. Her brothers Steven, T.J., and Joseph and sister Isabelle have all graduated from the center.

Toddler Room News

As we’ve kicked off the beginning of a new year, we have enjoyed a variety of themes and activities in the toddler room. One of the favorites, thus far, was “Goin’ On a Bear Hunt.” Throughout the week, the children were actively making the different components that make up the bear hunt. There was a lot of painting to be done - as we needed long wavy grass, thick oozy mud, a deep cold river, and a tall dark forest. We used foam peanuts for the swirling, whirling snowstorm. At the week’s end, the teachers put everything together, so the toddlers were able to progress through the parts of the story as it was being read. When they reach the cave and find the bear, they quickly retrace their steps, arriving back home safely. I can assure you that everyone wanted to participate over and over again in the make believe bear hunt.

Did your toddler share their experience with you? Can your child recite part of the story? As we tried to take our minds off the frigid temperature, we enjoyed our winter beach party. Everyone found great fun in sitting on their beach towels during story time, as well as using them at naptime. We also got a chance to taste tropical fruits! Most children were adventurous enough to try the choices presented, including pomegranates, pineapple, mango, kiwi, and papaya. The “Very Hungry Caterpillar” is one of the toddlers favorite books, and we decided to make it our theme. The toddlers enjoyed making caterpillars from adding machine tape. It was an exciting week, as we learned about the changes a caterpillar goes through on it’s way to becoming a butterfly.

We have a lot of new faces in our classroom. To start off, we are thrilled to have Erin Schnell-Gaines joining us as an assistant teacher. She has been a complimentary addition to our team. We also have welcomed 6 new little girls: Cora Ray, daughter of Pam Biddle and Brandon Ray; Tina Yang, daughter of Jianchang Zhou and Mingjie Yang; Laura Smith, daughter of Jennie and Travis Smith; Elena Conyers-Gaines, daughter of Erin Schnell-Gaines and Leonard Conyers; and Ava Burk, daughter of Christian and Carol Burk are all new to the center. Elaina Gjersvik, daughter of John and Erica (Cichowski) Gjersvik, also joined us from the infant room. It is interesting to watch the dynamics of the room change as now the females
The toddlers and teachers alike are looking forward to spring and especially to getting back outside! We recently had the opportunity to open windows, because of higher temperatures. The air was warmer, the sun was shining, and the birds were singing. It provided us with a little something to look forward to! It was definitely a welcome treat for our senses.

Laura

Five Little Snowmen, happy and gay
First one said, “What a beautiful day.”
Second one said, “We’ll never have tears.”
Third one said “We’ll stay for years.”
Fourth one said, “But what will happen in May?”
Fifth one said, “Look! We’re melting away!”

This finger play lets us know that old man winter is here to stay. After the first heavy snow of the year, the children bundle up in their snow outfits and ventures out to make snowmen and snow angels and to just have some fun in the snow. Also, one day after lunch while the snow was coming down the children went outside to catch falling snowflakes on their tongues. The teachers and children dancing among the huge snowflakes was a beautiful sight to see. Some of the ladies from Human Resources and Public Relations stuck their head out the door and remarked that watching the children brought back memories of when they were children.

January was a busy month for the preschoolers and February continues to be busy! In January we did a lot of activities relating to the snow. One of the activities was making snow castles with water cups. The children painted their castles with food coloring. The children also brought in some snow to make a snowman. It was fun seeing how long the snowman would last in the classroom.

The preschoolers also celebrated the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. We talked about how he “Had a Dream” and in his dream he wanted everyone to be friends. With this activity, the children made friendship necklaces.

Our February themes include friendship and family. The children were busy making name cards for the Valentine Luncheon. They also prepared flower centerpieces, finished our “Friendly Hands” poster, and used a can to paint. February is also the month in which the Chinese New Years occurs, as well as it being Multi-cultural month. The children will be doing some special activities to celebrate these areas.

Delois

The month of January was a very exciting month for the preschoolers… Especially since they completed their DINO-SAUR!! They sure did a lot of pink painting! They painted pink circles, pink rectangles, and pink semi-circles, which was also a great lesson in shapes. The children could not seem to figure out what all the pink was for until we started putting it all together on the wall. They were very instrumental in telling the teachers where the various pieces should go. The dinosaur is a Diplodocus and can be found on the wall on Miss Brandi’s side. We have had many preschool graduates - who are now kindergarteners - come in the room to check it out… YOU CAN’T MISS IT!!

The cold and icy weather has its advantages and disadvantages… but one great advantage is having various sensory activities that come along with it. We brought the sensory table inside after it had been sitting out in the cold. The children watched, played, and
hypothesized what would happen with the huge block of ice. We then emptied out the sensory table and filled it with sand and dinosaurs. The children enjoyed pretending they were back in pre-historic times. You could often find them digging through the same looking for dinosaur bones.

Our preschool class has also increased. Eddie Gjersvik, son of John and Erica (Cichowski) Gjersvik, has joined us from the toddler room. We welcome him to our class!

**Brandi**

Parents of preschoolers you deserve a hand! Delois and Brandi have conferenced with nearly all of you this month. Appointments are in the works for the few remaining families. I hope that you have found the parent-teacher conference a rewarding experience. Thank you for taking the time to visit with your child’s teacher. A thank you also to Brandi and Delois who prepared the conferences and often juggled their schedules in order to meet with you.
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