

GREENBELT CHILDREN'S CENTER
Accredited by NAEYC's National Academy of Early Childhood Programs
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WINTER NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2011



Edited by Flora L. Gee, Director



Dear Parents,

Soon we will be experiencing the natural phenomenon that Mother Nature sends our way each winter - SNOW! As adults, we often take the wintry wonderland for granted or we may even complain of the inconvenience that it sometimes brings. However, young children are often in awe of this event, as many pre-schoolers are just old enough to be observant of the properties of snow and its ability to change the way their world looks by transforming it to a beautiful, quiet, and blanketed place. Each snowflake is unique and has six sides! At Greenbelt Children's Center, we delight in having the opportunity to share in the experiences that Mother Nature provides for our children.



Remember to dress your child for the weather each day, so that he/she will be comfortable exploring the outdoors this season. **Your child will need a hat, mittens (best), boots and a warm coat.** Be sure each is labeled with your child's name! The best way to keep up with gloves/mittens is to attach them to the sleeves of your child's coat with fasteners. If you will be purchasing **snow suits or pants, be sure to get the ones with zippers at the ankles** so that they can slip on easily over shoes or boots. It often takes longer to dress the children to go outside, than the time actually spent outside! We thank you for your help with this. Our goal is to help each child to have 60 minutes of vigorous play each day to combat childhood obesity and support good health. Please support the teachers in their efforts to do this!
(Reminder-GCC follows PG County Public School closings/delays for emergencies/bad weather.)

THANK YOU!! THANK YOU!! THANK YOU!! THANK YOU!! THANK YOU!!

We have SO much to be thankful for at our center and Thanksgiving gave us a wonderful opportunity to reflect on this. We are thankful for our precious healthy children who brighten our world and renew our faith in the future. We are also thankful for you wonderful parents and grandparents who support our program in so many meaningful ways. Deep and sincere thanks to the parents, grandparents, and other family members who attended the Thanksgiving Feast, sent in dishes to go with our turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, green beans and cranberry bread, and/or read books for the Book Club Event. Each child had the opportunity to choose a book to take home and build their home library, sponsored by the grant from the Maryland State Department of Education through the Judy Hoyer Grant to Prince George's County Public School's partnership with GCC.



We know that there were other parents who were with us in spirit but were unable to get time off from work to join us- maybe next time. We truly appreciate your company and help! And remember, we sincerely welcome and encourage parent



involvement ANYTIME!!! It's nice to have a little help from our friends! December will have some additional opportunities.

Other special thanks to:

- **Shepherd's mother, Deanne (Rm 2) for donating liquid soap in dispenser's with Nemo on them**
- **Aidan's mother, Nalini (Rm 3) for volunteering with the annual NAEYC Parent Survey (she was able to collect 67% of parent responses) and volunteering in the classroom (full day!)**
- **Kasim's mom & dad, Telly & Rita (Rm 1) for the donation of hard backed books to the GCC Lending Library**
- **Christina's mother, Petra (Rm 3) for the fresh fruit to the classroom**
- **Samara's mother, Mimi, for donating outgrown clothes & shoes to the emergency clothes bin**
- **Kalayah's mother, Keela (Rm 2), for coming almost daily for lunch and helping in the classroom**
- **Evan's dad & mom, Ken & Kimberly (Rm 2), for volunteering in the classroom, dancing and singing, and reading to the children**
- **Zoe's mother, Jennifer (Rm 1) for the HUGE sticker donation to teachers**



Thanks to GCC families and staff for all the contributions to the food drive! Greenbriar management staff made the trip to take donations to the local food pantry which has been so severely depleted due to the economic strains on so many families. Let's keep the giving spirit in mind throughout the holiday season and into the New Year. This is one example of how you can **work with program staff members on a community project!**



We would also like to acknowledge a very special contribution from the Greenbriar Community Association for the \$2,000.00 contribution towards the GCC playground. It was exactly the amount that we needed to add to our fundraiser earnings to be able to acquire the new climber/slide that should be installed this month. We could not have done it without their help and we thank them truly! We still have more plans and will continue fundraisers to complete the work that needs to be done so that our children have a safe and beneficial outdoor learning environment. Thank you to all families and the Greenbriar Community for your support.

December Toy Drive

Our center has long participated in the Annual Toy Drive that the Greenbriar community is sponsoring. Please contribute a new or gently used toy in good condition. We will have a box in our center for that purpose. The toy drive will run from December 1-17, 2011. At this time of year, parents are often sorting out toys that children may have outgrown or are no longer interested in and these may be treasures for children who are in less fortunate circumstances. Thank you for thinking of others, and for helping us to teach the children about compassion for others in our community by participating in the annual toy drive.



FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD

The month of December is centered on the theme of children who live all around the world. Our goal is for the children to experience food, songs, dress, and customs of children from many lands, **especially those represented by the places that our families, community partners, and staff are connected to by birth or family history.** We will also be discussing the traditions and holidays that are celebrated by others.



Families are invited to share in our plans by scheduling with teachers for a date and time to come into the classroom and tell about your particular holiday or family tradition. This helps to present a multi-cultural curriculum that broadens children's knowledge and understanding of other cultures. Our goal is to help children to become comfortable and knowledgeable about the diversity of their world. The best way is to have this done authentically, by members of our diverse community, who have personally celebrated their own special traditions and have history, passed to them through family as well. It makes sense that this is the very best way to try to accomplish our goals. If you can help, *please* tell your child's teacher! We believe this is a very important part of our program, and *extend this invitation to-other-than-holiday times as well.*

You are each the experts of your culture and we ask that you help the teachers to convey accurate and reliable information about a tradition that they may not have much knowledge of. This is one way that we ask you to tell us about your family's background and beliefs and to make your child's learning experiences more meaningful. This is truly a gift you could give! Parents-we need you!

We also need a picture of each family for every child to display in the classroom. This is a requirement of accredited centers. Please be sure that your child's teacher has received this from your family!



We will also use this time to talk about the meaning of friendship and how to be a good friend to others. This is one of the ways that we work to promote the development of good social skills and peace in our world. We ask that parents help by reinforcing this concept at home. One way would be to ask your child to think of good ways to solve a problem that he or she might experience with a friend or ways to be helpful and kind to another child. We believe **it is important for you as your child's first teacher to tell your child that you expect him or her to solve problems without violence (i.e., using words to express anger or frustration rather than hitting) and that you expect that your child will show kindness toward others each and every day.** Make it a point to discuss this with your child each night. Children at this young age are very egocentric and feel that everything should revolve around them. It is very difficult for them to see things from anyone else's perspective. Without the help of the important people in their lives (family and teachers) it is hard for them to really think about other people's feelings. **Together, we can help to make a contribution towards peace in our children's world.**



TUITION AND CALENDAR REMINDER

Charges for tuition apply to each week of the school year. Please remember that tuition **MUST** be paid for the time the center is closed for Winter Holiday (December 26, 2011-December 30, 2011) in accordance with our published calendar given at enrollment. This is an important benefit for the teachers at GCC and we are sure that you have experienced the kindness, dedication and joy that the GCC teachers & staff give to your child. Payment due for the week of December 26th must be paid **on or before Tuesday, January 3, 2012**, when we resume our schedule. Please mark your calendar now so you are prepared for this. We thank you for your support.

HELP!

An observation of the daily sign in/out sheets in the classrooms is of concern to the Director and staff. Some parents are faithful and sign in and out, with written instructions every day about who is to be expected to pick up their child at the end of each day.



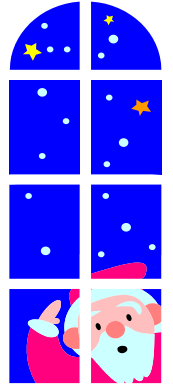
ALL PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMEBERS ARE REQUIRED TO SIGN IN/OUT WITH ALL INFORMATION EVERY DAY. Mrs. Gee has, in the past, circled missing information to bring this to the attention of some families. **As you read this, please have a conversation with all the adult members of your family including your extended family, to make sure everyone knows what is expected. This is for the safety of your child.** Please help us with this and please remember this form is a legal document.



WINTER HOLIDAY CELEBRATION AND BOOK CLUB EVENT!

Each classroom is planning a **Holiday Party and Book Club Event for Friday, December 16, 2011.** Please check in your child's classroom for a sign-up sheet for families to sign up to help with contributions of healthy goodies, and to join in the fun by helping with holiday crafts, reading to children, individually or in groups, and distributing books!! Sign up to join them if you can!

Remember the Lending Library! No excuses! We have recently received many wonderful books for our lending library-CHECK THEM OUT!!!! There are just so many benefits that come from reading good books to young children. You are your child's first role model for early literacy experiences. You show your child how to hold a book properly, which way to turn the pages, and you spark interest with your fluency and enthusiasm! We know you want these great experiences for your child and so do we. Remember, if **EVERY FAMILY READS 10 BOOKS** or more, the classroom will be awarded with a special treat! Also, some families in the past have donated a book to the lending library in honor of their child's birthday. **We hope that other families will make this a tradition to honor their child's birthday in the same way. It is a lasting gift when a book with your child's name becomes a legacy for many parents to read to their children for years to come.**



DID YOU KNOW???...

... That a note is **required** for any **absence of three days** or more? It can be a doctor's note or note from parent, but it must state why your child was absent, that your child may resume regular activities and is not contagious. It is suggested that a note be written for **each** absence so that you will get into a habit required for elementary school.

... That learning for young children is a combination of maturation and experience? Young children learn best when they are actively involved in concrete learning experiences. This means that the best teaching materials allow the child to see, touch, manipulate, explore, dismantle, reshape, listen to, or taste. (Keep this in mind when buying toys!) Play is how young children learn best!

...That pre-school is a time for establishing good habits for later years of school. We are helping to prepare your child for success in school, so **we ask that you bring your child in by 9:00 am daily**, as they will be expected to come on time to school. *Children who arrive late miss so much of the enriching curriculum teachers have planned.*

... That our **Federal Tax Identification Number is 52-1689271** for your income tax purposes! **Yearly summaries will be given to you in mid-January to assist you in documenting child care expenses for your income tax filing. This number also appears**



on every receipt you receive!

...That our director, Flora Gee, received an award from the Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children for her “dedication to the children in Maryland”. Mrs. Gee has served on the Public Policy Committee for over twenty years, advocating for children, families and staff at the local, state and federal levels.

Greenbelt Tree Lighting hosted by Greenbriar Community Center will take place , on Sunday, December 4th at 6 pm. The Greenbelt Elementary School Chorus will be singing holiday carols. The children and families who attend GCC were invited to attend and to sing holiday songs. Ms. Beverly Adamson and Ms. Mary Edwards volunteered to lead the singing and welcomed the mayor, members of city council, and other guests at the event last year. The Mayor of Greenbelt usually greets those in attendance and there will be hot chocolate and cookies for all! There will also be a breakfast with Santa in the Terrace Room hosted by the Greenbriar Community Association. It will be held on Saturday, December 17 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Please rsvp to the Greenbriar office by December 15, 2011.

Please welcome new University of Maryland interns from the Family & Child Studies Department. In January 2012, we expect several students.

LOST ITEMS! If you find unidentified objects in your laundry basket at home, there is a good chance that another family is searching for it! Don't be shy about returning things that have accidentally made their way into your home! Labeling all items brought from home, helps!

From Child Care Information Exchange

The children in our centers today will inherit a vastly different world than the one we inhabit today. So how should we be preparing them for this unknown future in our early childhood programs today? The November/December 2011 issue of **Exchange** addressed this question with four Beginnings Workshop "FutureThink" articles, including "Preparing Our Children Now for the Future: Five Outcomes to Pursue." Given the current climate, one might expect these outcomes to be "hard skills" such as early proficiency in reading, writing and math. Rather, experts in the fields of business, workforce trends, and early childhood education strongly pointed toward five "soft" skills:

- **Social Intelligence** — "The ability to connect to others in a deep and direct way, to sense and stimulate reactions and desired interactions."
- **Creativity** — "In a world where change will only happen faster, workers who can creatively relate to new scenarios will be highly valued."
- **Cross-Cultural Competence** — "Workers of the future must be able to successfully communicate shared goals, priorities, and values in a way that transcends differences and helps foster a spirit of collaboration."
- **Resilience** — "Children need to encounter limits and hardships to learn



how to persevere and solve problems by themselves."

- **Love of Nature** — "Finding solutions to environmental challenges will require the best minds and the best efforts of this and future generations."



Healthy Living

In an effort to combat the ongoing health challenges of the obesity problem, the Institute of Medicine has issued their report on kids' nutrition, physical activity and sedentary behaviors.

Here are some of their recommendations:

- During every pediatric visit, a health care professional should monitor the child's weight and height. They should take into consideration whether the kids are above the 85th percentile curves, the kids' weight gain and parents' weight status.
- Toddlers and preschool children should be encouraged to be physically active throughout the day. They should have outdoor playtime, access to a playground or open grass and an adequate indoor play environment too.
- Children's sitting or standing time should be limited to no more than 30 minutes at a time. IOM also advised against withholding physical activity as punishment.
- It advised children spend less time in front of a TV or computer.
- Children should be fed a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, low or non-fat dairy that are age-appropriate and in healthy portions. Since food preferences can be shaped during infancy, it is never too early to begin.
- Inasmuch as a lack of sleep is a risk factor for obesity, sleep duration that is age appropriate should be encouraged.

**HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON!
HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

