

Greenbelt Children's Center

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Flora Gee, Director

NOVEMBER 2011 NEWSLETTER



Dear Parents,

The month of November is a time to be thankful and we certainly have much to be thankful for at GCC.

Many thanks to all of you who have been able to take an active role in your child's program since the start of the first semester. Family support and involvement is an important component of our program. **Parents and grandparents, you have simply amazed us!!!** Please remember that we sincerely welcome and encourage you to come and visit your child's class anytime. For anyone who can, bring a brown bag lunch and come join your child at lunch time! We guarantee the children will treat you as a VIP and your child will feel very special to have you visit at lunchtime.

NOVEMBER MEANS NUTRITION

November means the end of the harvest and the children will be spending the next few weeks learning about nutrition and healthy eating habits. They will be involved in units about the good food guidelines, where foods come from, and discussions about healthy foods vs. junk foods.

The pre-k and alternative kindergarten programs took a field trip to Sharp's at Waterford Farm for a program called "A Day in the Life of a Farmer". **Parents can help by**

being sure that healthy lunches are being packed, using the guidelines in the GCC Parent Handbook.

(Remember: fruit roll ups, gummy animals, etc. ARE NOT FRUIT! They are the equivalent of candy. We allow them but you must pack **2 SERVINGS** of FRUITS AND/OR VEGETABLES IN EACH LUNCH!) We'll be looking for those *two* fruits and/or veggies!

This month will also bring discussions of the Thanksgiving Day holiday, Thanksgiving traditions, and our compassion for people less fortunate.

Parent-Teacher conferences will be available this month. Look for a sign-up sheet in your child's classroom to schedule a parent-teacher conference. Please be aware that conferences are scheduled tightly, and that you must be prompt so that time allotted can be used productively.

Canned Food Drive



Our center will participate in the canned and boxed food drive sponsored by the Greenbriar Community Association to help stock a local food pantry, which is experiencing a severe shortage. **From now until November 18th, you may have your child bring in a donation of canned or dry goods** to drop in the designated box at GCC. All foods donated will go to Thanksgiving baskets for local families throughout Prince Georges County who are less fortunate. We will also participate in the Greenbriar Coat Drive, so you may donate clean and usable coats through November 18th. A toy drive will take place from December 1st through 16th.

Annual GCC Thanksgiving Feast



We will have our annual celebration and feast on Friday, November 18th, at 11:30 am, in conjunction with

a Book Club Event. We are looking for volunteers to come in and read to the children, help with a book distribution, stay and help with lunch, and clean up! If you are available, please sign up in your child's classroom. As has been our tradition in recent years, we acknowledge that we are all working parents with limited time and energy. Therefore, each classroom will contribute to the feast through a cooking project using corn, cranberries, pumpkin, or sweet potatoes as a major ingredient. There will be enough for all the children in the center (and any parents, grandparents, or other family members who can join us). Then, on that day, the children will join together to enjoy these special treats with a turkey prepared by one of our staff. We are looking for a parent, aunt/uncle, or grandparent who can come in early to carve the turkey this year. Parents are invited to join us for this, and you don't need to bring anything but yourself! However, if you want to contribute to the luncheon, we will be happy to receive your contribution! (If you really want to help with clean up or settling the children for naptime, that would be so appreciated!) **Each of the children will receive a free book of their choosing to keep for their home library. Please look for the sign up sheet in your child's classroom and volunteer at GCC! Mark your calendar now!**

Thank You!

Thanks for all the party goodies for the celebrations in October. Thank you to all the families that supported the GCC fundraiser! We saw extraordinary efforts by a few families this year! **A special thank**

you to the families who participated in the fundraiser Donation received in lieu of selling items is also appreciated and noted from friends at GCC & out of state too!

This year, participants & donations netted about \$1200.00, an increase from last year's efforts, just enough to purchase the new climber/slide apparatus for the playground. We have signed a contract for the work to begin as soon as possible but we must continue our fundraising efforts to complete the rest of our plans. (We will continue fundraising efforts and the playground fund to replace the other aging equipment and swings, with safe functional, engaging equipment.) This brings our fund to just about \$14,000 and with a \$2000.00 contribution from the Greenbriar Community Association, we have met the goal of \$16,400.00. We are very fortunate to be located in such a caring community. Our heartfelt thank you to the Greenbriar Community and the Condominium Ventures Management Company for supporting high quality care and education for all our young children at GCC. We look forward to continued support to complete the plans in the near future.

And here is the info for the next fundraiser: We have started the Scentsy Fundraiser! Please check out the bulletin boards near the sign in sheet areas. There is a catalog and information to look at but if you go online to : <http://troyjackson.scentsy.us/> and click on the left side, you will see the Greenbelt Children's Center area to order items from. There are plush stuffed animals, nightlights and

scented wax warmers, many items would make great holiday gifts. You have until Friday, November 18th to place online orders.

Additionally, the Scentsy folks will be here on Thursday, November 17th from 3-6 pm to take your orders in person, if you would prefer that over an online order. Thanks for your continued support!



Congratulations to Jaelyn Edwards and family (Rm 1), for having the largest fundraiser order! They sold the most items and will receive the \$100.00 savings bond! Shani Gzifa's name was picked in the drawing for a free week of tuition! Way to go everyone who participated and donated towards our playground goal!

We promise to provide more opportunities for fundraiser participation! It could be your family who wins the free week of tuition next time!

DID YOU KNOW???...

- **GCC is closed on November 11th for teacher in-service day so that our faculty can attend full day training? This helps to fulfill requirements for Maryland regulations and credentialing.**
- That November is **National Education Week**, a time for parents to visit and volunteer at their child's school?
- ...that ALL children should have extra clothes on hand in case of an "accident" or if juice is spilled, etc.? This prevents a distressed child and teacher from

having to disturb you at work to bring something dry for your child!

A shoebox or similar container keeps everything together nicely and fits into the cubby space well. Cubby boxes make it easy for teachers and children to find things!

- **A photograph of your child or family**, fastened on the end is a wonderful identification marker and tells pre-reading children where their belongings are kept.
- *Please check today* to see that your child has a shirt, pants, **underpants**, and socks on hand at the center.
- That all items from home are **clearly marked with your child's name**. If you want a missing item returned, this is your best insurance.
- We request at least two complete changes for a younger child.
- *Please make sure that you **TAKE OUT ALL SUMMER CLOTHES NOW** before we're in the dead of winter and we pull out a tank top and shorts!!! **WE THANK YOU AND YOUR CHILD THANKS YOU, TOO!***
- Extra shoes or boots are needed too!
- That extreme caution should be used when entering/leaving the parking lot in case a toddler should pull free and bolt away from a parent? Drive slowly and be very observant!
- Parents can go to www.greenbeltchildrenscenter.com to view the GCC newsletter, calendar and menu, or to email

Mrs. Gee, Director?

SNOW POLICY REMINDER

Yes, we realize that very few of us want to think about snow yet, but as winter weather approaches, please remember our snow closing policy. Greenbelt Children's Center will follow the **snow or other emergency closing announcements made over the radio and television for Prince George's County Public Schools**. If the public schools announce that they will be opening late due to emergency conditions, we will open late also. For example, if public schools open 1 hour late, GCC would open at 8 am. If public schools open 2 hours late, GCC opens at 9 am. If the public schools close early, we ask that parents pick up their child as soon as possible and we will close when the last child is picked up or specify an early closing time for the center after calling all parents.

Extracurricular Activities

McKinney's Music Mondays have been fantastic! Children are learning about musical instruments, instrumental timbre (instrument sounds), musical notes, beats and musical terms. For instance, they learned about percussion instruments and each one was given the opportunity to play the snare drum during class in October. They enjoy this program very much and current research shows music and math are very closely related. Parents passing by often stop to watch because it is so engaging for the children.

Club Espanol is teaching the children and staff Spanish language and culture through activities and song. Teachers and



children practice Spanish each day in GCC activities such as calendar time, math, and social conversations. Spanish folders are being purchased for new pre-school families who started this school year and will be sent home in November for parents & children to practice at home. All families received the same last year and are expected to use the folders to help their children practice the Spanish words contained in the folder. A newsletter from Club Espanol program was sent home via art folders to all parents last week.

Funtastic Fitness gets everybody's heart pumping through challenging physical fitness activities that teach balance, coordination, cooperation, and team work.

Computer and technology support has enabled each classroom to connect to the internet from their classroom computers. Teachers have email access and have the use of a digital camera to document evidence of children's learning to share with parents and to include in classroom portfolios. **All of this support is made possible by the Judith P. Hoyer Pre-k grant.**

Inclusion of All Children Greenbelt Children's Center advocates on behalf of all children and believes that each child has the right to be cared for in a safe, nurturing developmentally appropriate environment. Sometimes children may have sensory integration dysfunction or less than optimum impulse control or delays in speech or language development. All children need high quality early childhood education. Children are all

children first, regardless of special needs. Please understand that staff and Director are aware of the levels at which children may be functioning at and that we will be working with parents providing appropriate resources to ensure that children receive early



intervention and services, if needed. Parents need to be aware that a child's behavior may look like aggression, but may really be poor impulse control. We ask that our community of families be patient, understanding, and tolerant of children who may be learning social, cognitive, physical, and emotional skills, just like everyone else, but at differing paces. They may just need more time than your child to learn these same important life skills. Thanks for your patience.

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY REMINDER

Prince George's County Public Schools are closed November 11, 23 24 & 25th. **GCC will be CLOSED on Friday, November 11th as well as Thursday and Friday, November 24th and 25th**, for the Thanksgiving holiday. We wish you and your family a safe and happy Thanksgiving!

From Parent Tip's:

“Make sure you read to your child daily, for the undivided time together and the literacy skills as well. This shows the importance that you give to books. Engage children in selecting favorite books. It's okay to select the same book over and over again. The

repetition helps children understand the story line and the characters, and helps them understand sequence, cause and effect. Link books and reading experiences with real life activities. **It is important to also use non-fiction books.** This helps a young child understand that there are books that help people with everyday activities. Share the newspaper with older pre-schoolers and school-agers, especially the Mini Page of the Washington Post. Try the comics and the weather report! Ask librarians to suggest special books for your child. They are aware of children's favorites and award winners as well!

See That Your Child Eats Well! *Eating right provides your child with the energy to be enthusiastic and focused. Typically, preschoolers need three snack sized meals and two healthful snacks a day.*

- You decide what your child eats and when- but it is up to the child to decide how much. If most of your child's meals are healthful, s/he will naturally eat the amount that is right for his/her growing body.
- If your child doesn't want to eat, don't force the issue. Forcing your child to eat when s/he is not hungry encourages overeating, which can lead to weight gain.
- Introduce one new food at a

time. Be patient. Remember, it can take a while for your child to develop new tastes.

- Certain items such as candy and fried foods can be enjoyed as occasional treats in limited amounts.
- Breakfast really *is* the most important meal of the day. It gives your child fuel to start the day.
- Sit down and eat with your child. S/he will mimic your good eating habits. Turn off the TV and radio and use the time to reconnect with conversation!

Parent Tips for This Difficult Economy from the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies:

Parents needn't despair. There are ways to help you save on child care expenses.

Take advantage of tax credits

Open a Dependent-Care Flexible-Spending Account

Offered by 96% of employers, according to Hewitt Associates, these accounts function like medical FSAs by allowing workers to set aside pretax dollars -- a maximum of \$5,000 -- to pay for child care. Eligible expenses include day-care centers, baby sitters and even day camps. To qualify, your spouse must be working, looking for work or a full-time student.

Remember that the same expenses can't be used for both the tax credit

and the FSA, says Mark Luscombe, principal analyst at CCH, a unit of Wolters Kluwer, a tax information provider. For example, if a taxpayer had \$8,000 in qualifying expenses for one child, \$5,000 could be covered by the FSA and the remaining \$3,000 could qualify for the full child and dependent care credit, depending on your income. If a taxpayer had \$5,000 in expenses for one child, the costs could be covered entirely by the FSA and no expenses would qualify for the credit.

Check IRS.gov for more information.

Seek Child Care Subsidies if you are Eligible

GCC accepts all child care subsidies and, because we are NAEYC accredited, our families who are eligible can use them here. Check this out if you think you might qualify for a Child Care Subsidy:

Prince Georges County Department of Social Services, Purchase of Child Care Voucher subsidy Program can be reached at 301-909-6200 (Unfortunately, this program is not taking families who are not receiving TCA/ TANF as of February 2011.)



National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Military Child Care Subsidy 1-800-793-0324 x 163

Federal Employees Education Act (FEEA)- check with your Human Resources Department if you are a Federal Government Employee, as you may qualify for a federal subsidy.

Wow, what a supportive community of families are at GCC this year. We almost need a separate newsletter to share all the good deeds that have occurred this month. We just have to acknowledge the following acts of random kindness shown to us here:



Thank you to:

Kasim-Rm 1 for the many book donations to the Lending Library, Teacher Appreciation efforts for this school year have been wonderful! Last month:



Elijah-Rm 3 brought in an Oreo Cheesecake for teachers, Pedro-Rm 3 brought in hand sanitizer, AJ-Rm 3 brought Halloween goodie bags and gift cards, Zoe-Rm 1 brought in coffee & bagels. We are amazed at the random acts of kindness and as the center director, I encourage them to continue!



We would also like to thank the Greenbelt Fire Department for visiting the children and teachers to teach about fire safety and for bringing the fire truck and ambulance to GCC for the children to climb in and observe, hands on, last week.



We would also like to acknowledge the Maryland State Arts Council for giving GCC a matching grant of

\$750.00 that funds the Inter Act Story Can Theatre program enjoyed very much by all the classrooms. Storyteller and artist, Ali Oliver, has long been a favorite artist at this program. Julie Wolf is our Artist for the Wolftrap program this year. Wolftrap will again be incorporating science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) into the GCC program.

Inter Act and Wolftrap bring an understanding of drama & literacy to the children and teachers through remarkable performing arts and we are so thankful that we are able to provide these high quality performance arts based programs to our children.

School Picture Day on Tuesday, November 1st!

Children get their pictures taken by Teddy Bear Portraits and we will be able to get free lunch cooler bags with each child's photo with any purchase. **On Wednesday, November 16th, Teddy Bear Portraits will return for parents to view the portraits and pay for their orders from 4 to 6 pm on this day only.**

NAEYC Re-Accreditation Begins Now!

We were just notified that with our final annual report due in January, that we must include information and data from our parents and staff that would tell NAEYC how well we are meeting the high quality standards required to maintain our accreditation certification. So we



will need your help, again! We typically do our Parent survey in the spring but we will need to do it in the month of November. Our loyal and faithful parent volunteer, Mrs. Lovell, (Aiden Rm 3), has again volunteered to hand out the Parent Surveys to each one of you on Tuesday, November 15th. She plans to be here all day on that day so you have the option of completing the survey in the morning at drop off or in the afternoon at pick up time.

Our parent surveys are required to be anonymous so that parents can answer freely and so Mrs. Lovell will collect them and place them in an envelope for the data to be input and tallied in an EXCEL spreadsheet. The results will be reported to YOU (all parents) and to NAEYC, in our annual report. We thank you in advance for your cooperation!

Get Well, Ms. Mary!

Many of you have asked about our Ms. Mary who works in Rm 2 and Rm 3. Mary has been at Doctor's Hospital recovering from an intestinal problem and we wish her a speedy recovery and hope she is back just as soon as possible. Children have made get well cards to send to her and we all miss her very much!



From an online service for parents at savvysource.com:

Learning to Listen

Here is a common parental fantasy: the kids actually listen to what we say. What a concept! But why does such a simple thing sometimes seem so far out of reach? Part of the problem may be that we often forget that listening needs to be learned.

Babies are primed to watch and listen: that's how they pick up language, expression and just about everything else. But as the little ones grow, parents need to nurture and attend to this crucial skill so that our kids can keep up with the ever more complex instructions, concepts and questions to which they must respond at school and at home. So how do we go about exercising those listening muscles? Just listen to the great ideas below....

Active Listening for Active Kids

Eliza Clark

Getting children to listen is one of the biggest challenges for parents. How many times have you heard one parent moan to another, "They just don't listen!?" And how many times have you heard yourself bark at your kids, "You need to listen!!" or the old classic, "Don't make me repeat myself!!!"? And yet repeat ourselves we do, over and over.

This standard parent-child struggle has taken on a different cast in our current "age of inattention." With grown-ups ever more distracted by the buzzing and blinking of our various devices, we need to focus more of our own attention on helping our kids learn to regulate theirs. This is important enough now during the early years (how much happier family life would be if our kids

listened better!), but really becomes critical to success later on in school and life.

Fortunately, there are many simple things we can do to give our kids a good start as they learn to regulate their own awareness and attention. Some of these ideas are absolutely basic, and yet they can't be emphasized enough.

Consistent limits and routines matter. If implemented in a positive, gentle manner, children will internalize and learn to value them (most of the time!).

Keep television and screen-time to a minimum. And it's also important to diminish or eliminate background noise from adult radio or TV.

Teach kids to use their "indoor voices" in the house—a tired mantra to be sure, but also an important first step in self-regulation.

Plenty of outdoor exercise and plenty of sleep are crucial.

Make sure there is a quiet space to which a child can retreat to look at books or play or daydream.

Lots of time for self-directed play teaches kids how to focus better than anything else.

That's the groundwork. But it's also important to think about how we talk with our kids when we are saying something they really need to hear. We think of this as encouraging our kids to be "active listeners." Ideally, we want them to engage with what they are hearing, rather than tune it out. To that end....

It's not always easy, but do your best to speak in a calm, quiet manner versus raising your voice. There is nothing kids would rather tune out

than the sound of parent ranting.

Make eye contact before speaking; ask your child to repeat what you've said, and then ask questions to make sure she got it: so tell me again what you need to do before we leave the house?

Prepare your child for what is coming next. The good old "ten minute warning" at the playground falls under this heading, as does explaining the plan for the day or weekend, etc. Looking ahead and pre-imagining events really helps children stay on track.

Encourage and listen attentively to your kids' questions, comments and suggestions, even though they may slow you down. When you show that you are listening to them, they are that much more likely to return the favor.

A Listening Hike

Jennifer

While good walking shoes, sunscreen, water, and a hat are all musts for a hike with a preschooler, this week, Savvy wants you to put away your binoculars and focus on what you can hear instead of what you can see. Listening engages the mind and shifts the focus from visual observations, increasing awareness in our natural surroundings. This special hike will also reinforce that ever-discussed skill by parents of preschoolers—listening! With these Savvy tips, your preschooler will surprise you with his listening skills on a fun hike at a nature reserve or just your local park and you may even reap the benefits later when you ask him to brush his teeth.

Make predictions: Talk with your child about what sounds

you might hear on your hike. Write down his ideas so you can check them off as he hears them. At the end, you can discuss why you did or did not hear the predicted sounds.

Listen carefully: Ask your child to listen very carefully. Help your child by stopping and standing still periodically or sit and close your eyes. After 30 seconds or so, your preschooler's mind will settle and he will become more acutely aware of his surroundings.

Ask questions: Do you hear any sounds from nature? Do you hear any animal sounds? How do you know they are animal sounds? What kinds of animals do you hear? Do you hear the wind? Do you hear the wind louder when you stand still or when you move? Do you hear water? Do you hear any sounds that are not from nature? Why? Do you hear any plants? Why do you hear the plants? Do you hear people or insects? Why do you hear these movements? Let your little listener ask you questions about what you have heard as well.

Compare sight to sound: At the end of the hike talk about the list of noises he thought he might hear. Ask him how it was different to listen than to see and why. Be sure to share with him your observations as well.

Families that listen together have fun together and learn new and interesting things about their environment. If your child is stimulated by this Savvy listening hike, then take listening a step further by encouraging listening in everyday activities. What sounds do you hear in the morning? What sounds do you hear at school? What sounds

do you hear that you cannot see? Why can you hear sounds that are too far away to see? Parents cannot encourage listening skills enough, so have at it and listen your way through the next week with your favorite pal.

FEMA National Emergency TEST November 9, 2011 at 2 PM:

As part of their ongoing efforts to keep our country and communities safe during emergencies, the Federal Communications Commission and Federal Emergency Management Agency will conduct the first nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS). The EAS test plays a key role in ensuring the nation is prepared for all hazards, and that the U.S. public can receive critical and vital information, should it ever be needed. The first nationwide test will be conducted Wednesday, November 9 at 2 p.m. ET. This test may last up to three and a half minutes, and will be transmitted via television and radio stations within the U.S., including Alaska, Hawaii, the territories of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa. Similar to local emergency alert system tests, an audio message will interrupt television and radio programming indicating: "This is a test." When the test is over, regular programming will resume. For more information about the nationwide Emergency Alert System test, please visit http://www.fema.gov/medialibrary/media_records/6407 and www.FCC.gov. On November 9 at 2 p.m. EDT, please remember: *Don't stress; it's only a test.*

FEMA Administrator's Message – In English http://www.fema.gov/medialibrary/media_records/6407

FEMA Administrator's Message – In Spanish http://www.fema.gov/medialibrary/media_records/6408

FEMA Press Release – <http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=55722>

FEMA Blog – <http://blog.fema.gov/2011/10/emergency-alert-system-test-one-month.html>

FCC Website – <http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/emergency-alert-system-nationwide-test>

Hand Washing Help!

In a recent report of the Maryland State Child Care Licensing Office, there was information that almost every program in Maryland was failing when children at the center are observed for proper hand washing. We need for parents and teachers to work together to help all of our GCC children follow the required steps for universal requirements for safe hand washing in any public space. The steps needed are:

- 1) Wet hands with warm running water
- 2) Apply one pump of soap
- 3) Scrub hands & wrists for at least 20 seconds (this is where most failure occurs, inspectors want to observe the children sing Row, Row, Row your Boat or Twinkle, Twinkle)
- 4) Rinse with warm running water.
- 5) Dry Hands with a paper towel
- 6) Turn off the faucet with the paper towel. Throw it away.

