

Greenbelt Children's Center

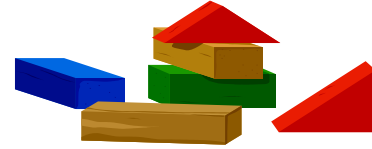
Accredited by NAEYC's National Academy of Early Childhood Programs

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SEPTEMBER 2011 NEWSLETTER



Dear Parents,

Our children are off to a **wonderful** start for the 2011-2012 school year, despite an earthquake on day 2 and a hurricane over the first weekend! We can only hope for better weather the rest of the year. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the Project Security Blanket Disaster plans posted on the classroom bulletin boards. All full time teachers have completed training and planning for disasters and we are very proud of the way the earthquake was handled by calm and caring teachers, none of whom had ever experienced an earthquake before. The children were all sleeping and probably did not feel the quake until awakened by us to evacuate the building. We said, "I'm so sorry to wake you up, but we have an emergency and need to go outside quickly! Please follow your teachers!" The children cooperated well; we got everyone outside with our "To Go Bags", emergency information forms, and portable phones which were, surprisingly, still working. We had many calls from parents. At first we did not know if more quakes were coming or if the building would be safe to re-enter, so we encouraged parents to come early for pick-up. Approximately 30 minutes later the building engineer for Greenbriar reported that he had found no damage to the building and we were told we could re-enter at our own risk and to report any damage, if discovered. After some discussion with staff and children's insistence that they needed the bathrooms, we took them back inside to use restrooms and have snacks and then they went back outside to play, which seemed safer than staying inside and not knowing if there would be anymore earthquake tremors. Despite all of this, children seem to be making good adjustments to their new environments and schedules, becoming more comfortable with their new classrooms and friends and probably will not realize what a historical event they experienced. I recommend that parents mark the event in their child's baby book to give children a story to share when they grow up about the remarkable event that occurred, on their second day of preschool in the year 2011!

Assuming that we can now get back to our regular routines, here is what to expect during the first month of the school year. Each week, the children will be introduced to themes or units that are incorporated into the daily activities of the classroom. Units for the month of September may include:

Wonderful Me!
Stranger Dangers
Manners

Orientation to the Classroom
Getting to Know Your Family
Safety & Fire Drill Practice

School Rules
The Season of Fall
Making Friends



Please remember to check the **Parent Information Board** in your child's classroom at least once each week. You can find the daily schedule for your child and the weekly lesson plans posted to give you specific information about your child's daily activities. We ask that parents fulfill a weekly "homework assignment" which is: to help your child to select an **appropriate item to bring to Show & Tell each Friday** that is related to the classroom unit. *This is one way for you to be involved in your child's program, helping to bridge home and center activities, and spend some quality time together with your child.* We really appreciate your help in making Show & Tell a valuable language arts experience for the class.

Parent Handbooks are available in the office for anyone who needs one. This has valuable information about center policies and procedures that parents need to know. **Please be sure that the office has received all forms required for your child's file and any updates of immunizations, new emergency phone numbers, or other information.** Each child also has an "Art Folder" in the classroom where parents can find artwork, notices, and information placed there for parents to take home. Try to check it daily



but keep in mind that children's work will often be displayed on the classroom walls before being filed to take home. Also remember that we use the Work Sampling System, so some work will be saved by teachers to be shared at Parent Conferences held twice per year. Eventually, you will have your refrigerator covered with creations - if you don't already!

PARENT -TEACHER OPEN HOUSE

We will be having Parent-Teacher Open House on Wednesday, September 21st at 6:30 pm for all classrooms. This is a change from our original date in your yearly calendar! Parents must pick up children before 6 pm and then return with their child for the event. This is an opportunity for you to meet all teachers and staff who work with your child and get general information about the program. It is our belief that parents and teachers need to work together as a team, especially when children are so young. Parents and teachers can get to know each other and establish relationships so important for successfully caring for and educating young children. *We plan to make this a Family Learning Party where children and parents can do fun activities that will show parents examples of how children learn through developmentally appropriate activities, and the goal is that parents will think of similar ways to engage in learning activities in their everyday interactions with their child at home. Our theme for this event is "Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning" (SEFEL). There is much research being done on the importance of healthy social emotional development for children's to growth and success in school and life, so there will be much emphasis on this for the entire school year.* Fundraiser samples will be served for refreshments.

Parents, please remember that *individual conferences will be arranged at a later date, for specific questions regarding your child.* It would not be appropriate to discuss an individual child's progress in front of the other families, so we ask that those types of questions be reserved for private conferences in November (or January for two year olds). At that time, your child will have a summary of their **individual progress** in each domain area, as teachers record observations and keep anecdotal records and samples of children's work. Do take this opportunity at Parent Open House to socialize and meet the parents of the friends your child is making this year and will talk about at home! Refreshments will be provided by GCC. We are very excited to be working with your child this school year and sincerely hope that the time set aside to spend with you at the Open House will be time well spent! PLEASE JOIN US! Expect that parking lots will be full and you may park on Hanover Parkway.



InterAct Story Theatre

This Creative Kids Drama and Literacy program begins for the children in October. This is funded by the Maryland State Arts Council with a match from GCC and is a benefit from our partnership with Greenbelt Elementary School and the Early Childhood Support Office of the Prince George's County Public Schools. Creative Kids is a series of literature based drama classes. The teaching artist leads students to explore and enact a specially selected children's book. Students also create and dramatize original stories based on the book. Various multicultural stories are used throughout the series. The program develops creativity and acting skills, promotes reading comprehension skills, fosters an appreciation of literature and promotes self esteem. Classes at GCC will be scheduled soon.

Re-accreditation with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

This will be a very important year for Greenbelt Children's Center. We will be declaring that we will proceed with the implementation of self-study toward the re-accreditation process for our national accreditation next school year, 2012-2013. This is a very thorough and involved process where everything we do is examined and documented. NAEYC has new standards and we are in the process of becoming familiar with them. The process must be done collaboratively and will require the involvement of each parent and staff member in the self-study assessment. We are counting on your help! We will keep you informed as we make the declaration when we file our annual report in January 2012.

Parent Participation Surveys

Parents were given forms asking for ways that they were willing to participate in our program. Please do not be shy-we welcome and encourage your participation any time! I may need volunteers to help set up and take down chairs in the Terrace Room on Back to School Night on September 21st. Please let me know if

you can help.

Welcome Staff!

Please welcome our wonderful faculty! Ms. Maria Bigelow, from the Prince Georges County Public School System will be co-teaching in Room 1's pre-kindergarten class in connection with the Public-Private Partnership between GCC and the Prince Georges County Public School System. This program is funded by a Judith P. Hoyer Grant to Local School Systems. Also returning this year is our fabulous Room 1 Team, including Ms. Christine Grabisch & Ms Donna Nance, Senior Staff Teachers with teacher's assistant, Crystal Walston, recent graduate of Eleanor Roosevelt High School's Child Development Program. Ms. Sonika Wright and Ms. Maureen (Mimi) Cagle are our wonderful Teachers in Room 2 with assistance from Ms. Beverly Adamson and Ms. Angela Laymon. Room 3's fantastic team includes Ms. LaVenia Johnson, Assistant Director/Teacher, Jill Barracato, Senior Teacher, Ms. Mary Edwards and Ms. Mina Agyei, teachers who will be assisting Room 3 and Mrs. Flora Gee, Director. Mrs. Gee typically works 9-6 pm on M, T, Th, F and 7 am – 3 pm on W. This semester, she is teaching a class at Prince George's Community College and will need to leave by 4 pm on Mondays effective 9/12/11. Also, Mrs. Gee serves on advisory boards with the PG County Public Schools, the Community College, the Judy Center in Adelphi, the PG Child Resource Center and the Public Policy Committees at MD Family Network in Baltimore, and the MD Association for the Education of Young Children (MD AEYC), our state chapter of NAEYC, which accredits our center. We are also expecting volunteer interns from ERHS's Child Development Program who will work during the morning four days per week this year, as well as some who may volunteer in the afternoon. Student interns from the University of Maryland will join us after the New Year, and we expect to have field placement students from Prince George's Community College. Due to GCC's accreditation with the National Association for the Education of Young Children, we serve as mentors for teachers in training. Please help our returning faculty members to feel appreciated and our interns to feel welcome! We are very glad that they are here! What an exciting year this will be!



THE FIRST FOUR STAR CENTER IN MARYLAND, *GREENBELT CHILDREN'S CENTER!!!*

Greenbelt Children's Center was again awarded a **FOUR STAR certificate** and is in the process of renewing with the Maryland State Department of Education Office of Child Care. The four star level is only awarded to centers and licensed homes that reach THE HIGHEST performance standards. Four star standards require that the center be accredited, that the staff be credentialed at the highest levels (4-6), and that the program provides for abundant reading and early literacy activities, uses a variety of evaluation tools to assess the quality of care for the children and assesses the quality of the experience for the child using the environmental rating scales (ECERS) surveys and has yearly goal settings and revisions. The center must have a salary scale and benefits package for staff that recognizes education and experience. The staff is required to complete continued training each year (24 hours minimum required at GCC), much more than the minimum state requirement and our fine faculty and staff at Greenbelt Children's Center meet these rigors every year! This quality initiative of the state of Maryland rewards our center with extra funding to be used for quality enhancements that we put towards the attraction and retention of good teachers, to fund professional development in college coursework, and for the retirement plan at GCC. As a parent, you should feel very good



about the choice that you have made for your child! Greenbelt Children's Center is a very good place to be. We have volunteered to be in a new pilot program named "Maryland Excels" which would replace the 4 star rating with system with a five "checks" highest award. We are awaiting the details on this new endeavor.



Extra Curricular Activities Offered at Greenbelt Children's Center

Over then ten year partnership with the local school system, we have added many extra's that support our work here. Here are some of those extras that all children benefit from:

Computer tech support helps to keep the computers working in all classrooms. This is no easy feat when children use computers! It also helps when we have to upgrade software for the office or teachers. We recently purchased our first touch screen computer monitor and a White Board. As soon as the carts on back order arrive, our tech support will get all of the new technology up and running. Because we do not have full time tech support here, if there are parents who can help with technology, please have that discussion with your child's classroom team and the office!



Club Espanol by Lessons from Abroad will be held on Fridays each week for 30 minute sessions. The Spanish language program is free for all GCC students and is paid for by the grant from MSDE to PG County Public Schools.

Each child new to GCC will receive a folder of information to help you practice the

Spanish language words at home with your child. Returning students received this last year.

Bonjour France! French language classes will be presented by Khady Diene, incorporating conversations, songs, and hands on activities in each classroom.



Music Mondays will continue with Mr. McKinney and the **McKinney Music** program.



On Thursday afternoons for all classes, we have also made arrangements for a physical fitness program through **Funtastic Fitness**, one of our favorite special events that we have during our summer program. We are working on a schedule for this to take place in the morning for the pre-school children. It will use a creative movement based curriculum and children will learn about fitness and health with silly stretches, exercise stories, aerobics, gross motor skill activities and healthy discussion handouts. We are also seeking an art instructor and music instructor for the program and will put these on the calendar as soon as they are scheduled.

REQUIRED: *All parents must have a copy of your photo identification (driver's license military I.D., state identification card) in your child's record in the office.* Please make sure you have yours on file.

Payment Policies: If a family's account has two NSF checks, all future payments must be made in cash, money order, Visa or MasterCard only. The returned check fee is \$35.00 for any check returned by the bank for any reason. Credit or debit cards must be used onsite and can not be used over the phone.

Reminders:

- Tuition must be paid *in advance by the first day of each week.*
- The Annual Material Fee is due at this time for all children unless it was paid in advance last

spring with your intention form.

- Please place a label with your child's name on it on each item brought to the center from home.
- Each lunch must have a protein and two servings of fruit and/or vegetables, every day.
- Remember to remove & label perishable items that contain meat, egg, cheese, or other dairy, for refrigeration. Please do not ask for *other* foods to be refrigerated, *we do not have the space*. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Tips for Turning Everyday Activities into Learning Activities (You are the first teacher!)

Talk, listen, read, play. Learning begins in everyday moments. This information comes from the "Countdown to Kindergarten Campaign" of the Maryland Family Network.

From the moment he is born, your child is learning about his family, his environment, and his own amazing abilities. As he grows, every experience contributes to his knowledge and his self-confidence. When he arrives at kindergarten, he will be able to use all the skills he has learned. His kindergarten teacher will invite him to look at books, draw pictures, share stories and make new friends. The kindergarten teacher will observe and record your child's progress-looking for the skills that will help him succeed in school. If some skills are missing, she will plan activities that help him develop these skills.

As a parent, you can help your child get ready to succeed in school. There are many activities that will fit easily into your daily routine and will help your child grow in 7 important areas of development that he will need for kindergarten and beyond:

- *Personal and Social Development-skills needed to understand & manage feelings, interact with people & assert himself in the world, based on relationships with parents and others. This impacts how a child feels about himself, a child's view of himself as a learner, and his sense of responsibility to himself and others.*

Cognitive Development in:

- *Mathematical Thinking- the basis for understanding of numbers, measurement, patterns & shapes and using these basic concepts to solve problems in order to do elementary mathematics.*
- *Scientific Thinking- exploring the environment & learning the importance of asking questions; investigating their world through observing, describing, questioning, forming explanations, & drawing conclusions.*
- *Social Studies- refers to children's understandings of the world around them; to understanding themselves as separate individuals & beginning to recognize and appreciate the differences among people & awareness of the culture & world around them.*
- *The Arts- children's participation in dance, dramatics, fine arts & music; involves children participating actively & learning to place value on what they are seeing.*
- *Language and Literacy-all the skills needed to learn to read & write & express ideas*
- *Physical Development & Health- includes skills such as holding a pencil to draw & write, running & jumping and knowing how to stay safe & healthy.*

Food Program

Greenbelt Children's Center is applying for the Child and Adult Care Food Program to supplement the nutritious breakfasts and afternoon snacks that are served here daily. We are required to collect the food program application form from each family. Please turn in your form if you have not already done so. **We can not apply until we have a form for each child at GCC.**

Grandparent's Day Book Club Event! Calling all grandparents who are available to come in and read to children! We will have our first Book Club Event on Monday, September 12, 2011 at 11 am. Please see the sign-up sheet in your child's classroom.

Fall Fundraiser with Claire's Gourmet starts now and runs through October 3rd! Look for the details in your child's Art folder. If everyone participates, we can do great things! Families in past years helped us to buy a new stove for the kitchen, new cubbies & cots for each child. This year, as mentioned above, our target is the playground equipment. The goal is for each family is to sell at least 10 items. The top seller over 15 items will get a \$100 Savings Bond! For every 10 items that a family sells/orders, one chance will be given for a special drawing for a FREE WEEK'S TUITION for one child! Monies earned will be used for our program of early childhood enrichment. The items will be delivered to GCC for parents to pick up on Wednesday, October 19th. Mark your calendars now! We hope we can count on you to participate in our fundraiser! We plan to have samples of items available for tasting at Back to School Night. Come taste the samples!

