

GREENBELT CHILDREN'S CENTER OCTOBER 2012 NEWSLETTER

7600 Hanover Parkway
Greenbelt, Maryland 20770
(301) 345-8830/(301) 345-0874 Fax
Edited by Flora L. Gee, M.Ed., Director



OCTOBER NEWS

The month of October is a very exciting one for everyone at Greenbelt Children's Center! The units for this month include The Five Senses, Parts of the Body, The Season of Fall, and Fire Safety. Where do you find the daily activities scheduled for YOUR child??? On the Parent Information Bulletin Board in your child's classroom! Our teachers post them up just for YOU! Remember, YOU are the first and lifelong teacher in your child's life and we want to make sure that we include you in our program.

Back to School Night

We were pleased at our "Back to School Night" with 68% family attendance! We hope that parents were able to get all the information about program and goals for the children, activities and routines, ideas for doing learning activities at home and more! There was an opportunity to meet all the staff while the children participated in a music activity with Mr. McKinney, Music Instructor. We thank everyone for making a dish and sharing it with other families at the Potluck Meet & Greet. There was an overwhelming positive response on the Parent Evaluations of our Back To School Night and we were delighted by that! The idea came from families last year and we are happy for the family engagement at GCC.

It was nice to hear parents express their appreciation of the teachers that evening and we encourage parents to do this often! Tell the teachers thank you when you notice their hard work and efforts, write a letter for their file, bring them flowers or breakfast! There will be a Teacher Appreciation Week in the Spring but don't wait until then to tell them that you appreciate them. They really have a demanding job! Come spend a day here observing or volunteering to see just how much they do each day. Teachers are happy to have such an enthusiastic community of parents to partner with this year!

Thank you!

Also, special thanks to several parent volunteers! Nicole's parents recently donated special paper to the children in

Room 3. Cassidy's mom (Rm 2) started & supports recycling efforts at GCC. Keelah Porter volunteered every day last year in Room 2 at lunch time and now volunteers daily at lunch time in Room 1, where her daughter, Kalayah, has moved to Pre-k. Mrs. Lovell's son Aiden, has moved on to first grade but she continues to volunteer here every week helping the littlest ones in Room 2. We are very grateful for the dedication and support to Greenbelt Children's Center. We want to acknowledge and encourage everyone's generosity!

Judith P. Hoyer Grant

The Hoyer grant award for this year provides funds for the Pre-k program in Room 1 which is subsidizing 40% of child care tuition for income eligible families in that classroom during 42 weeks of the PGCPs year. This MSDE grant also funds the Spanish Language Program for 1/2 year, Technical Support, Wolf Trap Artist in Residency programs, the Lending Library, the Book Club Events and field trips. It will also fund the hearing, vision and speech screenings for all Room 1 children. Everyone else will have the opportunity to have their child screened for a nominal fee. Speech screenings are scheduled for October 10, 2012. Hearing & vision screenings are scheduled for November 1, 2012. Both are offered to children in Room 2 & 3, at a nominal fee. Additionally, GCC received a matching grant from the MD Arts Council to bring InterAct Story Theatre workshops and a Story Teller performance. The center is funding Funfitastic Physical Education, McKinney's Music, Creative Kids Drama & Literacy Program and French Class. All our GCC children and families benefit from these "extras". Kudos to the staff for all the extra work that must be done to document the outcomes of all these benefits, the paperwork is unbelievable and our staff goes way above & beyond the call of duty. Room 2 is using the Creative Curriculum by Teaching Strategies and Room 1 and 3 use the Houghton Mifflin updated version of their curriculum, which were also received from other MSDE grants previously. All curriculums have been or will be revised to include Common Core Standards. The Maryland Model For School Readiness is being revised by the MD State Department of Education, in partnership with the state of Ohio, as a result of both states receiving Race To The Top Early Learning Challenge Funds from the federal government. Our Director, Flora Gee, accepted the invitation to work on the Comprehensive Assessment System MD State Advisory Council, which will meet quarterly through 2015, to tackle this revision for Maryland.

Our "Project Security Blanket" Disaster/Risk Management Plans that our community of staff & parents has been working on for several years, are posted in each classroom. There was legislation making this a requirement in all early childhood programs licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education. Become familiar with the plan to know what would occur in different emergency situations

and feel free to comment or suggest improvements.

Parent Engagement

Parents are invited to take an active role at GCC, which includes responding to Family Survey forms asking you if you have been informed about all of the above information, as well as information from the Parent Handbook that was reviewed with each of you when you first visited GCC. We count on you to be able to answer all the questions favorably when the time comes to conduct the annual surveys again! If you need a new Parent Handbook, please just ask! Also, GCC has standing Parent Advisory Board meetings and the next one is scheduled for Thursday, October 25th at 5:30 pm. The purpose for the October Meeting is to look over and revise the GCC Wellness Policies, as required in the Wellness grant that GCC is receiving this year to improve Wellness practices such as adding more fresh fruits/vegetables to meals and snacks, training teachers & parents about nutrition, increasing activity levels and reducing “screen time” for children. It is a grant requirement that parents be included in working on the development and revision of Wellness policies for GCC. Please look for a sign up sheet and join us in this endeavor.

We may also be planning for our first Parent-Teacher Training, tentatively planned for 10/25/12 and we will announce that as soon as we confirm with the trainer.

Screen Time in the Early Years (Exchange Everyday, September 25, 2012)

“Many kids use and understand media devices and platforms better than we do. But their technological abilities are often ahead of their emotional maturity and judgment,” advises James Steyer, founder of Common Sense Media, in **Work & Family Life** (September 2012; workandfamilylife.com). Steyer shares research results on the impact of screen time on preschool children:

- A landmark study at the University of Washington showed that for every hour per day that preschool boys spent watching violent TV shows, they had three times the risk of developing behavioral problems by age 7. This was true even when they were watching cartoons on commercial channels, which often have more violence than adult shows.
- For each hour of TV young kids watch, they have a 10% higher chance of attention problems at age 7, including restlessness, trouble concentrating and impulsive behavior.
- Visual images may over stimulate and rewire preschoolers developing brains. Learning to read and write takes time and patience. Kids who are used to the fast pace and instant gratification of screen media may get easily bored.
- More than two hours daily screen time also increases the odds that kids will be overweight. They are exposed to a barrage of ads for high-caloric, sugary foods-and when they are sitting in front of a screen, they are not running,

jumping and moving around.

We are required to consider this in our program at GCC and we hope that parents will think about this for their child at home.

Fire Safety Education Program

This is National Fire Prevention Month and the children will participate in the Stop, Drop, Roll, and Cool Program and learn about fire safety and calling 911, in case of emergency. Practice at home with your child to learn their name, address and phone number. We hope you have the occasion to visit your local firehouse with your child as they have been scheduling open houses for this month! We are arranging for a visit from the Greenbelt firefighters to come to GCC also.

Congratulations to Greenbelt Children’s Center!

Greenbelt Children’s Center is a very good place for young children! Our center has maintained national accreditation with the National Association for the Education of Young children since 1999. Additionally, the center administration underwent a comprehensive evaluation called the Program Administrator Scale (PAS). The purpose of the PAS is to measure Early Childhood Leadership and Management in our early childhood program. Research has shown that overall administrative practices are crucial for ensuring high quality outcomes for children and families. GCC was assessed on 25 items by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The national average rating is a 4.0 out of 7.0 and we are happy to report that our baseline rating was 5.8, and our current rating was 6.0 when GCC was reassessed again, well above the national average. The process was very complex and documentation of actual practices were reviewed by MSDE. Also, last spring, Greenbelt Children’s Center was assessed on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales, which assesses the quality of the environment and teacher interactions. We are very proud that our teachers scored well above the national averages on that rigorous voluntary assessment. Due to the high ratings on the PAS and the ECERS, we are confident that the assessment that the National Association for the Education of Young Children conducted here at GCC on August 27, 2012, will have a good result. NAEYC will report those results within 90 days.

Field Trips:

Friday, October 26, 2012 8:30-12:30 pm Trip to the National Zoo (originally to see the baby Panda)

Look for more details and the permission sheet to sign up your child and to volunteer as chaperone.

Wednesday, October 31, 2012 8:30 am—12:30 pm Annual Field Trip to the Pumpkin Patch!!

Children in Rooms 1 and 3, their teachers, and parents will have the opportunity to go to Sharpes at Waterford Farm in Brookeville, Maryland to pick pumpkins and ears of popping

corn, go for a tractor pulled hay ride, tour the farm, participate in a program about bees & the role they play for crops, view farm animals, and enjoy a maze. *The cost for the children will be paid by the MSDE Hoyer Grant to the local school system and includes one pumpkin and ear of corn per child.* However, parent chaperones will need to pay admission at the farm on the day of the trip.

Details and a class permission slip will be posted in

Classrooms 1 and 3 soon! The children will carry and eat lunch at the Farm in a pavilion area, weather permitting. Boots are recommended in case of muddy fields and the trip will occur even if it's misty that day. **Parents must sign the classroom permission slip in order for your child to**

attend. We will need parent chaperones, so please volunteer to attend if possible. **Please remember that parents of public school pre-k children must show proof of PG County Background Check.** You may call PGCPS at 301-952-6775 for more information. Besides, we like your company and want you to have some October FUN!

IMPORTANT REMINDERS!!!!!!

- Check your child's extra clothes box before leaving today. We have already had some cool weather and had only shorts and a tank top to dress a wet child in. Winter is coming! See if your child has seasonally appropriate extra clothes on hand in her cubby!! Your child depends on you for this!
- Daylight Savings Time ends Sunday, **November 4th**. Set your clocks **back one hour** and please change the batteries in your **smoke detectors!!**
- Please make sure that all forms are now complete and in your child's file in the office. Remember to **update** your child's **emergency information card** if any phone numbers have changed. Be sure to also **update** the office with any **booster immunizations** your child may have received.
- Have you checked out a book from the Lending Library this week? We have so many good choices for you & your child to enjoy together! Remember the minimum goal each month is **10!**

Childcare Subsidy Programs

We have an agreement with the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Association (NACCRA), now Child Care Aware, that makes it possible for parents to participate in the United States Armed Forces program to subsidize the child care expense for any child with a parent serving in one of these capacities: Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom (first priority), children of active duty military members of all other branches of the Department of Defense (DOD) (priority two), including the Coast Guard (priority three), and children of DOD APF and NAF civilian employees. You may contact **Child Care Aware at 1-800-**



793-0324 x 163 for more information. There is also a Maryland Child Care subsidy called **Purchase of Care (POC)**. This program is available to income eligible parents, through the Department of Social Services. There has been a shortfall of funds and a freeze in place since February 2011 but they will lift the freeze effective November 19, 2012 for the lowest income levels. Look for information posted on the GCC front door for more information. The number to call to find out if you are eligible is **301-909-6200**. We also have families that participate in the Federal Education & Employment Act (FEEA) child care subsidy and a subsidy that HUD employees can access. You should check with your Human Resources Department at work to see if your employer offers childcare assistance or has a flexible spending account program for dependent care. Take advantage of these great programs if available at your place of employment.



Policy for Delayed Openings & Emergency Closings

Remember that we follow the closing announcements for Prince George County Public Schools for emergency closings due to snow, etc. If PG County Schools are closed, GCC will be closed. If the public schools have a delayed opening due to bad weather conditions or other emergencies, then Greenbelt Children's Center will have a delayed opening also and will start at the time designated by PG County Public Schools. For example, if they open one hour late, GCC will open at 8 am, if they open 2 hours late, GCC opens at 9 am. If they close early, we may do the same. We do not want to endanger our children, staff or families and we follow this to keep everyone safe.

Fall Harvest Celebrations!!

On Wednesday, October 31st, at about 3:30 pm snack time, the classrooms traditionally celebrate the Season of Fall and the end of the Harvest with fun and games! Look for a classroom sign-up sheet to contribute time and/or healthy goodies to the event in your child's classroom. And by all means, join us for a howling good time! **(Please, no costumes).**



Fall Fundraiser

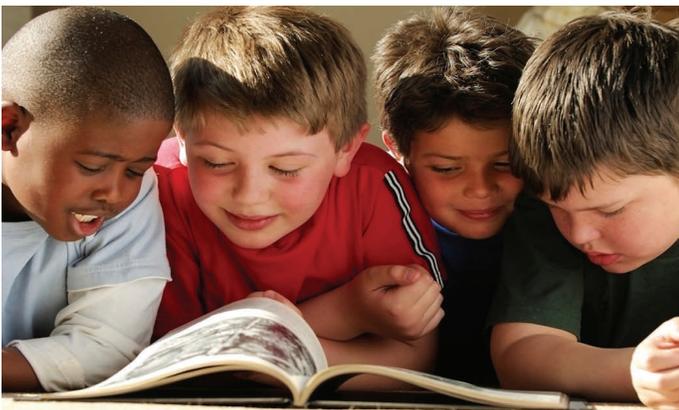
A special thank you to everyone who is helping to raise money for the playground! **Please mark your calendar to remember to turn in orders & money by 6 pm on Monday, October 1, 2012 and to pick up your order on Wednesday, October 17th between 3 and 6 pm, as we do not have refrigerator storage space at GCC.** The **drawing for a week's free tuition and Savings Bond winner will be announced at the Harvest Party on October 31st**. We really appreciate families collecting payments and turning in only one payment for your fundraiser payable to GCC, making it easy on Ms. Jill, who volunteers to do the fundraiser each year.

We will start a **KidStuff Coupon Book Fundraiser** on October 29th that will run for 2 weeks and end on **November 9th**. Information will be sent home soon and we think you will like this new fundraiser! You will get to keep your Coupon Book if you sell just five! GCC will keep 50% of sales. It should be great for everyone.

Social Skills that Children Need

In Karen Stephen's article, "*Social Skills Children Need To Make and Keep Friends*" in the *Parenting Exchange Collection #10*, *Exchange Magazine* (*ChildCareExchange.com*), she observes that children must be able to:

- Recognize shared interests
- Gracefully join into play
- Pay attention to non-verbal communication cues
- Listen to and respect feelings
- Empathize with another person's perspective
- Cooperate
- Accept others
- Extend a trustworthy helping hand



Reading Aloud

Research shows that reading aloud is the BEST way to give children the tools they'll need to become good readers, listeners and students. Reading together is also a special time for you to bond with your children. Let them snuggle next to you as you share stories, laugh at silly characters and root for heroes.

Here's how:

- *Read slowly with expression, use different voices for different characters,*
- *follow words with your fingers as you read,*
- *point to pictures and say the names of objects & colors,*
- *have your child repeat the names*

- *make bath time reading time with waterproof books or telling a story to them while they bathe,*
- *take books every where you go (the car, doctor and dentist appointments, etc.)!*
- *Remember to have fun!*

Remember to read at least 10 books per month from the Greenbelt Children's Center Lending Library!!!



Look Before You Lock Pledge

In August, we received correspondence from Shannon Rudisill, Director for the Office of Child Care in the Administration for Children & Families at the federal government, asking that parents, child care programs, Head Start and other adults who care for children, work together to prevent heatstroke in vehicles. This is the leading cause of all non-crash-related fatalities involving children 14 and younger, when children are accidentally left in a vehicle. 23 children died from this in the summer of 2012.

We gave the forms to all families in August and most parents & teachers have signed the pledge to: **call GCC if you will be late bringing in your child or if your child will be absent. If you forget, your child's teacher will call to find out why your child is not here, will check all bus seats if transporting children on field trips and, both parents and teachers pledge to notify authorities immediately if they see a child left unattended in a vehicle.** Working together, this effort can keep children safe. This form will now be a requirement for all new families when enrolling at GCC. Please be sure that you have signed the pledge for your child.

Look on our GCC playground! We have a pumpkin patch growing where last year's pre-k children "recycled" their pumpkins! We have volunteer pumpkins growing on the vines! Ask your child to show you!

