



## March Newsletter

### Dear Parents:

March 13 marks the one-year anniversary of our closing due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. What we thought would last for two weeks turned out to be five months until we reopened for families on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020.



**One year later, we are still standing! We are thankful for all the families who came back in those early days and to the new families that are joining us now. We can not survive without your support!**

We reopened with 6 children and are now at 35. Our capacity is 60 so we have a long way to go before we are restored and have the income to continue paying our staff. Staffing costs more because we cannot combine classes at early morning or end of the day as is customary pre-pandemic, so each class must be staffed for longer hours, yet we have very diminished income. We are grateful to the federal and state governments for providing grants and loans that have sustained us during the Pandemic so that we can continue to offer our services to the families in the community.

The first week of March is the Public Policy Forum of the **National Association for the Education of Young Children** (NAEYC) where early educators from all fifty state--as well as Puerto Rico and U.S. territories like Virgin Islands and Samoa--for the purpose of advocating on behalf of children, families, and the early childhood profession. Mrs. Gee, director has served as Public Policy Chair on the Board of the MD Association for the Education of Young Children and will be attending the Conference and meeting with Congress people, virtually, the first week of March, as she has for over two decades. Additionally, she is submitting testimony to legislators in Annapolis for public hearings she would normally attend in person.

**Advocacy** is important for parents and staff also. Legislators at county, state and national levels need to hear from you too! If you need help with who to contact, Mrs. Gee will be happy to help you. At this writing there is a federal effort to pass the Recovery Act that would have \$39 billion for childcare, stimulus checks for many families that include \$1400 and \$300 for children, tax breaks and so much more. This is worth advocating for.



Childcare is expensive for families but has long suffered with paying low wages, which is the largest part of our budget. For every dollar we collect, we pay 80% back out for staff compensation and wages, including benefits. Added to this are costs for rent, insurance, school supplies, food, office supplies, curriculum, professional fees, taxes and utilities. Childcare has long operated on razor-thin budgets. Compensation is linked to what parents can afford to pay.



There is a severe staffing shortage of early childhood educators, even more so during the pandemic. There are not teachers in the pipeline signing up to take years of education and training to earn less than what can be made working in retail, dog walking and other jobs. There is a saying, "Families can't afford to pay, teachers can't afford to stay, there has to be a better way".

This is the time to talk to your legislators at all levels about how the pandemic has affected your families' childcare needs before and during the pandemic. All of us have a voice and for the sake of our children's outcomes for life, let us use them.

## Spring is coming!

The teachers at Greenbelt Children's Center enjoy the opportunity to help the children discover the changes of each season. Just imagine what it must be like to watch the beautiful miracles of springtime through the eyes of a young child! We hope that everyone takes some time to celebrate the season of spring with his or her child! Go visit the library, the zoo, or a museum with your child, or go to a park – everyone plays! Not sure if we can still do all of these at this time, but we remember when we could...



### March Units

This month the children will be learning about Things That Move, Engineering, Babies and other Units.

We hope that all families are faithfully buckling their child in the back seat of vehicles with the appropriate child seat in order to keep all our friends safe.

We believe it's important to introduce the children to the world of work through the next unit, **Community Helpers**. **Parents, you are sincerely invited to participate by visiting (virtually), the classroom to talk about your occupation (or a related one).** We suggest that parents use "hands on" items to show to make the experiences more concrete for young children. For example, painter: paintbrushes and rollers; accountant: adding machine with tape and office supplies; nurse/doctor: stethoscope and flashlight, etc. **If you can participate, please arrange a day and time with your child's teachers.**

Throughout the month, we will provide opportunities for the children to try out different roles from the world of work through dramatic play experiences. We will also turn our dramatic play centers (aka House Corners or Imagination Centers) into post offices, grocery stores, a hair salon, hospital, farmer's market, etc.





## LENDING LIBRARY, Let's Hit Our Goal!

Remember to read at least **10 books per month** from the GCC Lending Library! We have been not quite consistently reaching our goal for each classroom each month. The goal is important because children benefit greatly when read to, it helps them to be successful in school & life!

It's been 30 years since Hart & Risley's seminal research (reported in *Meaningful Differences*) uncovered what's come to be known as the "word gap"—the startling gulf between the quality and frequency of adult-child conversations in some households versus others. (Source: Brookes Publishing Co.) As you might imagine, the children immersed in environments with richer conversational opportunities came to school better ready to learn. Last year, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) issued a policy statement urging pediatricians to encourage parents to read aloud to their children (**Literacy Promotion: An Essential Component of Primary Care Pediatric Practice**):



*"Reading regularly with young children stimulates optimal patterns of brain development and strengthens parent-child relationships at a critical time in child development, which, in turn, builds language, literacy, and social-emotional skills that last a lifetime."*

The MD State Department of Education evaluation of our pre-k grant includes our lending library participation rates, and the children cannot earn incentives if *even ONE family does not meet the required numbers*. Please make sure *your family* is working to help meet the classroom goal of ten books read per month!



## MARCH

Winds of March, we welcome you,  
There is work for you to do.  
Work and play and blow all day,  
Blow the winter cold away.

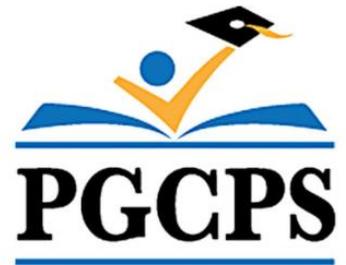


**2021-2022 School Year Planning** Parents of a child **turning five by September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021** must register at their neighborhood school for kindergarten. Parents of a child **turning four by September 1<sup>st</sup> and are Prince George's County residents can go to the link at Greenbelt Elementary to register for the public pre-kindergarten program at Greenbelt Children's Center through that link.** We expect to have funding that reduces parent tuition for public pre-k, in the past just for income eligible families but this school year, every family gets the subsidy! We hope that continues for next year as well! **We will begin forming our class rosters for Preschool/Pre-kindergarten and Before and After School Wrap Around Care, soon.**



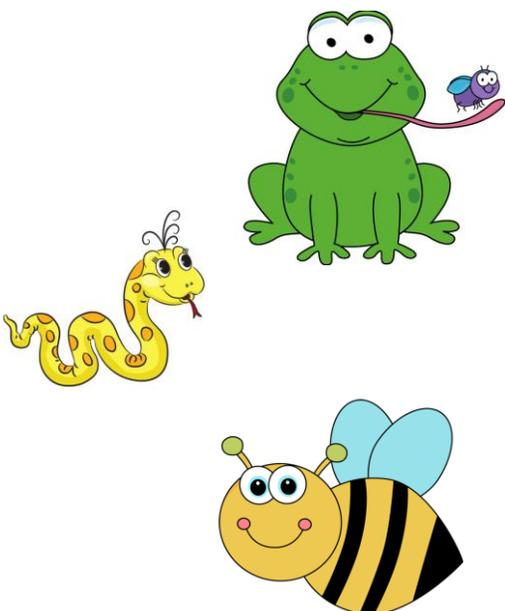
Benefits for your child include small class size, low teacher/child ratios for differentiated instruction and attention, full-day care to cover your workday, a calendar with more school days open, research-based curriculum that is approved by the MD State Department of Education and an excellent "Five Check" (MD EXCELS highest rating) NAEYC accredited early childhood program. These are particularly important things to consider as you make your choice for the fall. **The value of our early childhood program is exceptional.**

Our **partnership with Prince George's County Public School for the Pre-k Public School Program that is here at Greenbelt Children's Center has been in effect for 21 years.** GCC families get first priority for spaces but keep in mind the program is advertised to the public by Maryland State Department of Education and PGCPSS. We will send home forms next month giving you the opportunity to reserve your space at GCC.



## Springtime

A small green frog  
On a big brown log;  
A black and yellow bee  
In a little green tree;  
A red and yellow snake  
By a blue-green lake,  
All sat and listened  
To red bird sing,  
"Wake up, everybody,  
It's spring! It's spring!"  
~ Unknown Author





## Looking Ahead . . . **THINK SUMMER!**

Be sure to start thinking about your summer schedules because you will want your child to enjoy the special opportunities, we are planning for them at our Summer Program this year! We have been busy working on our Summer Activity Calendar; we have some wonderful special events planned to take place outside, if outdoor visitors will be allowed by that time. We are also waiting to hear if the pool will open this year and allowed during the pandemic, it was not in 2020. Regardless, we want the children to be immersed in arts and crafts, nature, reading for recreation and fun, especially more time outdoors.

**Summer Program begins on June 21st** and continue for 10 weeks until August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021. A Schedule Reservation form for your child will be sent home soon so that you will be able to reserve space before we offer spaces to the public. We are expecting PGCP

S will start the school year on August 30, 2021.

Also look for the **Summer and Fall Intention Letter and Form** that will be sent home with your child in April. It will have information about next school year's calendar and fees. Parents will need to complete the Intention Form for the upcoming summer and fall program at Greenbelt Children's Center regarding your child's continued enrollment.

Intention form is due back to the office **April 16**. (Submit with payment of Annual Material/Enrollment Fee for 2021-22 to keep the same tuition as the 2020-21 published rate. We expect a 5% increase in fees for next school year to meet our rising costs, especially for keeping pace with minimum wage increase and rent.



## Transition Plans

**An individualized transition plan** for next year will be developed for each child as soon as parents notify the GCC office of their child's plans for the coming year on the GCC Intention Form. Teachers help transition what comes next so your child will feel secure and confident about the change.



## *Thank You!*

Thank you for the random acts of kindness to our faculty during the month of February! Keep the kindness coming all year!



**\*Reminder:**

**Spring Break is Friday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>  
& Monday April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**

## Free Tax Help:

- **GIVES (Greenbelt):** Greenbelt Intergenerational Volunteer Exchange Service. Call 301-507-6580
- **United Way MyFreeTaxes** ([unitedway.org/myfreetaxes/unitedway](http://unitedway.org/myfreetaxes/unitedway))
- **IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA):** if income is less than \$56,00, disabled or limited or no English. Call 1-800-906-9887 or [irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep](http://irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep) (VITA locator tool)
- **MilTax for Military Families:** Call 800-342-9647 or [MilitaryOneSource.mil](http://MilitaryOneSource.mil)



## Announcing the 2021 Week of the Young Child™!

Join NAEYC as we celebrate our youngest learners on **April 10–16** with fun-filled, themed days. All week long we'll be featuring music, resources, and [activity ideas](#) for teachers and families that will make play meaningful and learning fun! There is so much children learn as they enjoy music, explore food and cooking, build together, create art, and celebrate their families!

