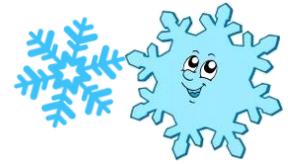


## January 2022 Newsletter

Dear Parents,  
Happy New Year!



Thank you for your patience and physical distancing at drop off and pick up as we continue to follow the safety requirements during the pandemic. We recognize it is cold outside and sometimes the weather is miserable. We thank Greenbriar for installing a new light at our front door. It has become obvious that not allowing parents to enter the Center has been something that has protected our program from repeated closings. Please remember to keep physically distant from other families at drop off and pick up. Thank you for all that you are doing to keep your family and your GCC family safe!

Covid testing conducted onsite and requirements for proof of negative test elsewhere, if missed at GCC, continues to help in identifying positive cases and reduce classroom and center closings. The surge of the Omicron variant and the fact that many who are fully vaccinated, boosted and even those who had Covid last year, are susceptible to Covid. All the protections we currently have may not be enough to prevent future closings and it is a possibility we all need to prepare for. What we can do is continue layered mitigation strategies-vaccinate, boost, wash hands, wear masks, disinfect and test. Staff and families working together for the protection of our unvaccinated children continues.



We are revising our policy for payment due to Covid closures. Our program covered many families last year, so no one had to pay for more than a two-week closure. We are re-setting the calendar effective January 2022, so all families will be required to pay for a closure going forward. We simply can't survive the loss in revenue that was supported by previous grants. We are considering the possibility of future grants, if available and received, to cover revenue losses and increased expenses to operate.

Grant funding to cover the losses in revenue due to covid closures began in September through the December 2021, have been exhausted. Grant funds were used to cover parent tuition, backfill lost revenues due to enrollment, increased costs for PPE, paper products, supplies, and food purchases, rising insurance rates, as well as for the compensation to staff for the long hard hours that the pandemic has required. We must invest in our staff because without them, we would have to close rooms or worse, as has happened to many programs since the start of the pandemic. There is a severe shortage of qualified teachers in child care and public schools. GCC is very fortunate to have been able to retain the highly qualified teachers throughout the pandemic. Your continued support of our high-quality program is what sustains our ability to continue to remain viable. We appreciate the sacrifices our families are making to walk with us down this path for the sake of our children and the investment in their futures.

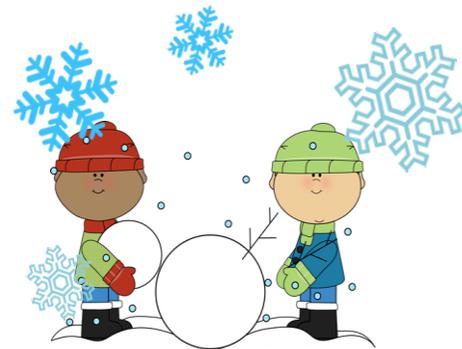
GCC has maintained **Level 5 EXCELS** achievement since this quality initiative began. Our program is maintaining the highest level of quality for early childhood care and education. It is a significant achievement that requires highly qualified teachers, accreditation and compliance with state, county, and city regulations.

January requires the completion of a detailed Annual Report that must be submitted and accepted by committee review to the National Association for the Education of Young Children to maintain accreditation and then a fall validation visit. We must submit a licensing renewal application and packet to the PG County Office of Child Care, followed by an unannounced inspection. There are more requirements due to our public pre-k program- we are required to participate in the MSDE Adult and Child Care Food Program, requiring documentation of menus for meals and snacks served, receipts for food purchases and labels of nutritional components that meet the required Federal standards and unannounced Food Program Inspections. We also have Monitor visits from the MSDE of the public Pre-k program and the documentation required for the program.

These are all factors that contribute to the high-quality program we provide but the workload for this is daunting. We may make it look easy, but there is an immense amount of work required for us to meet our main priority: educating, nurturing and protecting our young children and providing a service so that parents are able to contribute to the workforce. We hope that the program we provide is helping and supporting our families, as we count on your support of our ability to provide this.

## JANUARY THEMES

All classrooms will be involved in units about the **Season of Winter**. Please remember to dress your child warmly so that they can be comfortable in exploration of the winter season and play outdoors, including boots for snowy or wet muddy days. Classrooms will also incorporate units on **Feelings and Emotions**, while Rooms 1 & 3 will work on studies of: **How Things are Built and All Aboard! Buses, Boats, Planes and Trains!** Room 2 is finishing up **Community Helpers** and moving to a Project of Study **"We are Artists"**. Children will also be introduced to the important accomplishments of **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** whose birthday will be observed this month.



**For early childhood news and resources:** Early childhood news appears on the website of the Maryland State Department of Education at <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/>.



## QUALITY TIME

Below are some suggestions from **The Complete Early Childhood Curriculum Resource Book** by Mary A. Sobut and Bonnie Neuman Bogen, p. 155.

### Parent-Child Activities:

- Practice hopping and standing on one foot.
- Read some stories.
- Make hot chocolate, add marshmallows. Watch what happens.
- Match family gloves or mittens.
- Cut a holiday card into pieces to make a puzzle.
- Look through a magazine or catalog for winter clothing.
- Sing winter songs.
- Finger paint with white shaving cream - no paper needed - right on the table!
- Make angels in the snow.
- Play a game or put a puzzle together.
- Visit the library (it may not be open during the pandemic). Get a library card. (Sign up for **Beanstalk!**)
- Make a tiny snowman. Bring inside to watch what happens.
- Feed the birds. Count them in your yard.
- Fold napkins into rectangles and triangles.
- Pick up white cotton balls with tweezers or clothes pins to count them.
- Make snowman with marshmallows.
- Play in the tub. What sinks and what floats?
- Sort the silverware!



## Tax TIME



Don't forget to claim child care expenses on your income tax! You will need to use the Center's **Federal Identification Number: 52-1689271**. Keep this number handy so you will have it to complete your federal and state tax forms. You will soon be receiving a summary of all charges & credits for the 2021 tax year in your child's Art Folder. For families with an adjusted gross income of about \$25,000.00 or less AND especially those with more than one child, be sure to look at the **EARNED INCOME CREDIT (EIC) form** to see if you qualify for this tax credit. It has been described as the best real tax break for working families and you may be due a refund of several thousand dollars - even if you paid little or no taxes this past year.

More information will be available about EIC this month, as the Maryland Family Network has asked that child care centers help spread the word to working families and assist them in taking advantage of this. Locally, in non-pandemic years, there are places such as the public libraries that will have VITA volunteers who can help you file taxes for free. As soon as we find information about this, we will share it.



## Thank You!

*MANY SINCERE THANKS TO **EVERYONE** FOR ALL THE GOODIES, BREAKFASTS, LUNCHES, GIFTS, AND SURPRISES LAST MONTH!*

**Special thanks to all the folks who helped to make last month very special for GCC children and teachers:**

- **Thank you for being generous to the teachers at holiday time!** Teachers really appreciate your acknowledgements! We have a very special community of parents supporting the GCC program. Thank you for your kindness to the faculty. From letters and cards with kind words and cash bonuses, coffee, donuts and breakfast treats, our staff's favorite Panera lunch delivery, gift cards and presents, and so much more! We feel your love!
- Thank you to the Kiner family, Adaline, Room 1, for the huge donation of new hardback books to the GCC lending library!



## Important Reminders



- ❖ Reminder: we have children with **severe nut allergies**. Please follow the policy and refrain from sending in peanut butter or other food items that contain nuts. You may want to try a substitute, Sunflower Seed Butter, as some families have discovered this to be enjoyed by their child. Please help us to keep our children safe! Thank you so much for your cooperation with this request.
- ❖ Everyone please **remember to think about your child's extra clothes on hand at GCC!** Time to make sure we have seasonally appropriate and plenty on hand for life's little emergencies! Ask your child's teacher for help to swap out clothes that are more seasonally appropriate.
- ❖ We are asking that each family send in a **family picture** for their child's extra clothes classroom cubby box if you have not yet done so. It makes for a cohesive classroom community and helps each child feel like they belong by having their picture or family picture in their classroom.
- ❖ **Signing in and out of GCC each day:** specifying who is due to pick up and what time, is an especially important responsibility required of each family. Please parents, remind all your family and friends who pick up your child to sign them out at the time of pick up. Current GCC parents need this reminder too! *The MSDE is doing regular audits requiring all licensed programs to send in Family Sign In/Out Sheets in 2021 and it will be continuing in 2022.* It is one of the most important legal requirements we must follow.





## Sleep Factoids

### From Exchange Everyday

Here are some interesting factoids from a Time article on the need for sleep, "***Please, Please, Go to Sleep***":

- Studies show that 60% of a child's growth hormone is secreted during sleep.
- Getting too little sleep appears to have a role in obesity. One Israeli study found the effect in babies as young as 6 months.
- Australian children sleep almost a full hour per day more than American kids, who sleep less than kids in nearly all other countries.
- The National Sleep Foundation recommends 14 to 15 hours of sleep for babies, 12 to 14 for toddlers, 11 to 13 for preschoolers, and 10 to 11 for elementary schoolers.

**We wish you and your family  
a healthy and Happy New Year in 2022!**

