



Circle Time

The mission of the Parent-Infant Center is to support parenting by enabling young children to grow and learn in a safe, stimulating, loving environment

The accreditation race begins!

This month PIC begins the challenging process of qualifying for re-accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), which holds the gold standard by which child care agencies across the nation are measured. PIC has been accredited since 1997 and the process and standards have been steadily made more challenging in the decade-plus since our first accreditation visit.

During the past few months the staff has been in "self-study" mode and preparing information-filled binders for each classroom to share with the accreditation team when it visits PIC (sometime between January and March). The administrative team also is preparing a program portfolio that demonstrates we meet some 700 standards set by NAEYC



for high-quality child care programs.

Families also play a role in helping us achieve accreditation. You will soon receive a Family Survey asking about your child's experience and your knowledge of the program and our values (e-mail and paper copies will be available). We distributed the same survey last summer to establish a baseline. Teaching staff have their own survey to help guide the

self-study in determining strengths or weaknesses within the program.

NAEYC accreditation covers 10 standards, each with a detailed set of criteria to be judged: Relationships, Curriculum, Teaching, Assessment of Child Progress, Teachers, Families, Community Relationships, Physical Environment and Leadership and Management. In coming issues of Circle Time, we will be reviewing each of these areas to provide you with more information about best practices, NAEYC standards and PIC's approach to providing quality care.

To learn more about the accreditation process, please visit NAEYC's website (www.naeyc.org) or ask Cindy or Cherie.

July events help beat the heat!

As July rolls around, so too do muggy days and high temperatures. We invite you to join us at our upcoming July events designed to beat the heat. Mark your calendars!

July 8 - Lemonade Lull - Come along for some refreshing treats in the PIC Courtyard from 5-6 pm

July 29 - Spoil-Your-Supper Ice Cream Social

Spoil your supper with cold sweet treats for everyone! 5-6 pm

Don't forget Story Time in Clark Park every Thursday beginning at 7 pm. Enjoy read-aloud stories with PIC teachers and friends. Don't forget



to bring a blanket to sit on and join us at the turtle in North Park!

Wild Things

As summer begins, our theme in the Wild Things room is Summer Sensory Fun.

We enjoyed watching, feeling and tasting ice cubes melt. In honor of Father's Day, we enjoyed finger painting picture frames. We even decorated the wrapping paper. We played in the sensory table with colored sand and rice and we had such fun scooping the sand and rice with spoons and putting it into paper cups. We enjoyed comparing the two different textures.

The big hit this month, however, was our first class trip to Linvilla Orchards. We headed out with eight of our Wild Things: (Indigo, Lucy, Aviel, Marcela, Margot, Sam, Oliver and Piper) and their parents on Friday, June 12, to pick strawberries.

I don't know who was more excited, the children or the teachers! The rain held off and the sun was shining, so we piled into cars,



buckled up the car seats, and off we went!

We took a bumpy hayride to the fields to pick a quart of strawberries to take home to our parents. Some of the strawberries actually made it home, as all of our Wild Things were tasting them along the way! I'm sure we'll see lots of strawberries in lunches! At Linvilla Orchards we also got to see some animals. We saw chickens, ducks, deer and sheep. We got to feed the deer and sheep some corn and feed the

ducks too! A couple of Wild Things tried to eat the corn, but quickly discovered that uncooked corn doesn't taste very good, and was meant for the deer!

The children enjoyed running in the fields, and everyone quickly discovered that the toddlers, though they are little, are much faster than we are! To end the day, we had a picnic lunch before heading back to PIC for much-needed naps. It was an exhausting but fun day, and a nice end to the week! Thanks, Elisabeth Dubin (Sam's mom) and Mary-Knight Young (Piper and Oliver's mom) for organizing this! We had lots of fun!

Reminder: Now that summer is here please make sure to check your child's cubby and replace the winter clothes or clothes that are too small with summer clothes that fit. Thank you!

— Kristy Carter

Sunshines

The Sunshine classroom hosted a Spring Open House this month. The Sunshine parents brought in delicious snacks and refreshments and there were activities set up on the tables with plenty of fun games for the children to enjoy.

Children and parents from the infant rooms were invited, since they will become Sunshines very soon. The open house gave them the opportunity to meet and mingle with the parents in the Sunshine room, meet the teachers and check out the classroom. I would like to thank Sunshine Room Parents Monica Wagner and Iliana Kohler for their support and enthusiasm and to Jill Shashaty for taking the torch from



Monica (whose daughter Avianna is transitioning to the Peanut room).

In the meantime, the Sunshines have been busy learning about animals. The Sunshines brought in their favorite stuffed animals from home and used their growing language skills to answer questions and tell

stories about the animals. We enjoyed playing an animal guessing game, which used their cognitive skills, and listened to clues to try to figure out which animal the clues were about. The Sunshines also became excavators, using hammers to help free animals frozen in ice.

To continue our theme, we planned a trip to the Zoo which was a treat. We had several parent volunteers (Thanks to Lewis, Steven, Jill, Rita, Sara Jane and Nellie) and the Sunshines were excited to see the different animals. We named them, talked about their colors, talked about what they were doing and what they were eating.

— Demita Hill

Peanuts

As teachers, our goal is to fill our classrooms with a variety of fun and exciting activities for the children. Sometimes despite our best intentions, challenging behavior finds its way into the classroom. When teachers encounter this behavior, they are often eager to find specific strategies they can use to cope. Designing a caring and nurturing environment that promotes engagement of the children and teaches new social skills can help.

Challenging behavior is often a result of boredom, frustration, anxiety or confusion. Having a consistent schedule, and minimizing transitions so children don't wait for long periods of time between activities, can prevent outbursts. It's also helpful when we meet with parents to discuss the expectations of the classroom and



find out what routines or schedules exist at home.

Teachers must plan effectively to create a caring, responsive environment. Asking open-ended questions and modeling the skills being taught helps build children's social-emotional development. Switching between large- and small-group activities is also important.

Using books, puppets, songs and games are easy ways to get kids to

understand the concepts being taught. Providing positive feedback is a way of supporting development of positive behavior rather than focusing on the problem behavior. Our goal is to have a positive, supportive interaction with every child every day.

Positive relationships between teachers, students and their families are essential tools to children's social-emotional development and can help foster positive behavior.

When children continue to demonstrate challenging behaviors regardless of efforts to develop positive relationships, intensive, individual interventions can be used.

As educators, we must remember that effective planning coupled with patience can solve the mystery of challenging behavior.

— *Kharma Hicks*

Starfish

You don't have to look far to see signs of change in the Starfish classroom. Spring bring us new beginnings and by summertime, things really heat up in the Starfish classroom!

The Starfish have been very busy preschoolers, learning about Things That Grow. We've been exploring the four elements (soil, sun, water and seeds) that are necessary for plants to grow. The children enjoyed the experiment of planting seeds, adding water, and setting our plants in a sunny window. They are reminded each day to water their plants and enjoy watching their plants grow.

The children also made 3-D daisies while the teachers encouraged color recognition, name recognition and a discussion about summer and how plants and trees grow.

We experimented by mixing paint in bright summer colors to create beautiful flowers and we borrowed PIC's flower shop prop box so the children could use the flowers to create gardens and bouquets for pretend celebrations.

Talking about transitions also helps us talk about Starfish who are leaving us. If you have ever moved or been separated from friends, you know how hard transitions can be. Going from a comfortable environment to one that is different and unfamiliar can be very stressful. This is often how young children feel as they move from preschool to kindergarten. For the Starfish, the transition from preschool to kindergarten has been met with a mixture of delight and concern. On one hand; there is the pleasure of accomplishment as they move on to



something new. On the other hand, there is some anxiety over leaving teachers that they know and love for something unfamiliar. For our Starfish parents, there is the pride that comes with seeing their child grow to meet new challenges along with concern for how their child will cope with the change.

For the Starfish teachers, this means saying goodbye to children we love, and hoping we have provided a solid foundation for continued growth.

— *Jhonna Hurley*

Grant from SCI-West transforms outdoor areas @ PIC

With a \$3,000 grant from the Sustainable Community Initiatives (SCI) West, a coalition of nonprofit organizations in West Philadelphia, we have begun to transform three outdoor spaces into teachable environmental learning gardens.

The gardens we are planting are in the space across from the Penn Alexander School and PIC is collaborating with greening professionals, environmental education experts, and science teachers at PAS to transform the areas into places that are beautiful as well as educational. With proper garden design, appropriate signs, consistent care and the use of native plants, we believe these areas will benefit both PIC and PAS. Because the space is open to the public on evenings and weekends, the surrounding community can also benefit from additional educational green space.

On Saturday, June 13, several families joined us to plant the first of the three spaces: our Butterfly Garden. The garden is almost



complete and has already begun to attract caterpillars and butterflies.

Plans for the remaining two spaces include the renovation of a poorly landscaped area outside the infant classrooms that will become a "dinosaur garden" complete with foliage for crawling and exploring, and the transformation of a bare hillock outside the stucco building that will require building a small retaining wall and planting additional native plants.

Want to get involved? The next work day is **Saturday, July 11 from 9 am - 12 Noon**, where we will have help from UC Green as we construct a retaining wall along the barren hill.

Please e-mail Chelsea [ckoziana@parentinfantcenter.org] to volunteer.

This part of the project will also make our campus healthier as the hill is usually covered with commercial mulch that washes away after rainstorms, sending debris and runoff into Spruce Street. Excessive use of mulch has been linked to asthma attacks, so a well-planned garden with dense foliage will reduce the need for mulch and make a healthier environment for young children.



Thanks to Sue Pringle and UC Green for helping us organize the workday.

Reminder: Contracts, tuition & PPP

New PPP Cycle

The new fiscal year also means the beginning of a new Parent Participation Program (PPP) cycle. Families in our early learning program will receive a final 08-09 report within the next two weeks. Please continue to write down your PPP activities on the slips provided by your child's classroom and put them in tuition boxes.

If you are in the habit of e-mailing your hours, feel free to e-mail them to Family Life Coordinator Lynne Piersol lpiersol@parentinfantcenter.org. Thank you for your continued enthusiasm and involvement!

Do you have trouble thinking of things to do to fulfill your PPP investment? Asking your classroom teacher for ideas is always a good place to start. Watch the weekly e-news from PIC for special projects, or check out the bulletin board by the ground floor west entrance.

Reminder: Contracts & Tuition

PIC's tuition schedule for FY 2009-10 goes into effect this month. If you have forgotten the new fees, check the bulletin board in the gym or our website www.parentinfantcenter.org.

Please remember that tuition is due

by *the fifth* of each month. If your child is enrolled in summer camp, tuition is due the week *before* your child is scheduled to attend. PIC's policy is to charge \$10 per week to all accounts in arrears. If you are having difficulty making payments, please see Accounts Manager Safia Abdullah to set up a payment plan that your family can handle.

Contracts for 09-10 will be distributed to all day care families this month, as required by PIC policy and the Department of Public Welfare. Please sign and return to Lynne as soon as possible!