### Spring 2015



# news from our neighborhood THE ANNUAL REPORT ISSUE

## A Message from the Executive Director: Debbie Green

### Invitations to Exploration

On a recent morning I visited an infant classroom and saw a group of children sitting on the floor with a box of socks in front of them. Each child quickly realized that something was "hidden" inside of the sock and then spent a long while figuring out how to pull the object out. As each child pulled out a small ball, animal, or wooden block, he or she giggled with delight.



In a four-year-old room a mirror was placed in the middle of a table and glass jars filled with water were placed around it. Next to the jars were watercolors with small pipettes. No directions were given. As children entered the room, they saw the table and began to experiment with mixing colors and seeing the reflections of the jars through the mirror. Even as an adult, I was entranced.

We have begun to experiment with the term "invitations" as it describes a way of thinking about experiences for

young children. Our hope is to invite and engage children's curiosity and critical thinking through experimentation. This is a very different way of teaching than the typical teacher-driven "lesson planning" approach.

The idea of invitations for learning comes directly from the early childhood programs of Reggio Emilia, Italy, where the programs have become world-renowned since

> the mid-90s. In Italy, the commonly used term for what we refer to as an "invitation" is a "provocation" (sounds just beautiful when spoken in Italian), as these activities provoke the thinking and creativity in children.

Other aspects of the Reggio Emilia philosophy that we continue to delve into are long-term projects with the children based on their ideas and interests, making learning visible through the documentation of children's work, beautiful classroom environments that focus on natural materials, and connecting children to the outside natural world.

As we begin to explore the Reggio approach to education, our goal is not to replace our missiondriven philosophical beliefs of how children best

grow and learn, but to continue to look for inspiration of how to improve upon what we do. Early childhood education continues to be a changing field, and we want to stay on the forefront of best practices around the world. We consider ourselves new learners of these ideas and we greatly look forward to sharing our learning adventures.

Dellie

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Debbie Green, Executive Director Rachel Isaacson, Communications Manager

risaacson@parentinfantcenter.org

### A Message from the Board President: Carol Lerner



This is my last message as Board President, as I will be stepping down in May after six years of board service. PIC has been near and dear to me and my family since Elijah was a Starfish.

While I am sad, I leave the Board in very capable hands. The strategic plan is in year three, and the Board, in collaboration with PIC administration, has made great strides toward the Center's goals.

- The Buildings and Grounds Committee has a plan for the updating and repair of the facility, including recent enhancements to the Sunshine and Rainbow rooms.
- **The Development Committee** has strengthened fundraising initiatives, including a successful Giving Tuesday campaign that raised over \$3,000.
- The Diversity Committee collaborated with the Human Resources Committee on a staff survey to learn about staff experience of having their children enrolled at PIC.
- The Finance Committee has ensured the continued financial sustainability of PIC.
- The Human Resources Committee has assisted in a new staff professional development plan and the revision of the Staff Handbook.
- The Parent Involvement Committee has initiated a new Parent Mentoring program, and is finding new and creative ideas for parent participation.
- The Quality Committee continues to ensure that we are working on the right things for the children and parents of PIC.

While my official role will come to an end in May, PIC will remain a priority for me. I look forward to strengthening the bond of PIC alumni parents, many of whom have been dear friends since we embarked on the journey of parenthood. I will continue to attend ArtStart, contribute to the Plant Sale, and use every opportunity to advocate for quality early childhood education at PIC and in the larger community.

I look forward to continuing to be a part of the strong connection that PIC has with children, parents and the neighborhood.

and

### Income 2013 - 2014



# Quality Shows | Curriculum Enrichment

When educators use the term curriculum, many words might pop into your head, like "planned" and "teacher-directed." At PIC, we understand curriculum to be so much more. Most recently, our teachers have been practicing and reflecting on ways to inspire children's imaginations, observe and acknowledge the topics that excite them, and truly engage children in the learning process.

### Loose Parts Offer Inspiration and Ideas

### A look at the Fireflies



It was exciting to put out all these materials and watch the children's imagination take over.

—Meghan Fraatz, PIC Teacher

As the 3- and 4-yearolds arrived in the Fireflies room recently, they found several tables set up with an *invitation* to learn. Assistant Teacher Meghan Fraatz had gone down to PIC's Recycleteria and was inspired by all the shades of green she found on the shelves: a variety of buttons. thin wooden sticks, sheer and glittery fabrics, pom poms, tins with lids, shredded paper, paint chips, and more. Meghan grouped different items together on several tables and stood

back to see what would happen when the children came. How would the Fireflies relate to the materials she selected? What items would engage the children? Who would be drawn to different materials?

As a teacher, what she saw was very exciting. She saw four children have a birthday party, complete with invitations (paint chips), drinks (pom poms and shredded paper mixed in clear containers) with a wooden stick added into each "glass" for a straw. Another group quickly started placing and sorting buttons in tins, while others prepared a big pot of spaghetti.

According to Meghan, "It was exciting to put out all these materials and watch the children's imagination take over."

### A look at the Starlights

Assistant After School Teacher Akira Hedrick wanted her first graders to create something that was known to them in order to experience the thought and planning that takes place before an item appears on a store shelf.

She found her inspiration from the mason jar DIY projects on Pinterest. With baby food jars from the *Recycleteria*, Akira guided her first-grade Starlights in a project to create their own snow globes.

After taking pictures of each student in class (in a nice unplanned twist, some children asked to take pictures of each other), Akira printed, laminated, and hot-glued them into the jars. She worked with the children to add water, oil, and glitter.

The children wanted to know, "why baby oil?" The class took a moment to observe how the glitter moved in the water and how it moved in the baby oil. When asked "what's the difference?" one student

replied, "It comes down slower." After discussion, the class decided together that the oil was a better choice for their project. According to Akira, "what started out as a fun art project became a mini-science lesson because of the curiosity of the Starlights."



What are "INVITATIONS" to learning? See page 1 to learn more about this exciting approach to discovery.

#### PIC Recycleteria: A loose-part learning space



This past year, we have added more opportunities for loose-part learning in our early learning and after school programs. Recently, we turned our old copy room into the *Recycleteria*, a place where teachers and children will find loose parts for their classrooms. Such play is based on *The Theory of Loose Parts*, first proposed back in the 1970s by architect Simon Nicholson who believed that the loose parts in our environment empower our creativity.

We invite families, nearby alumni, and friends to contribute to the *Recycleteria* by bringing in items from home. We welcome: cardboard tubes from wrapping paper, toilet paper/ paper towel rolls, bubble wrap, scraps of fabric, cardboard egg cartons, cereal boxes, baby food jars, water bottles, glass mosaic tiles, paint chip samples, yarn, and ribbon.

## Quality Shows | Curriculum Enrichment



Nature Playground and Certified Classroom

Since being recognized as a nationally certified outdoor classroom in June by the **Dimensions Educational Research Foundation** and the **Arbor Day Foundation**, PIC's *Magic Circle Nature Playground* has inspired the creativity and learning of 188 PIC toddlers, preschoolers, and school-agers. We are proud to be part of a growing movement in outdoor education and have shown our play space to nearby friends and colleagues in early education, Congressman Jim Roebuck, representatives from the Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children, along with teachers and staff from area nature centers, arboretums, and parks & recreation departments.

### "Starring" PIC:

PIC has been re-designated as a 4-star (highest!) center in the **Keystone STARS program**, which measures quality in child care. This designation will enable us to receive over \$70,000 in grant support from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Grants from Keystone STARS support (1) program merit and (2) teacher education and retention. These funds enhance classroom materials, help send more teachers to professional conferences, and allow us to offer teacher bonuses based on tenure and education level.



### **Preparing for NAEYC:**

PIC teachers and administration have been working especially hard preparing for our re-accreditation visit from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Pursuing NAEYC accreditation is a voluntary, ongoing commitment to intensive self-study and improvement. Accreditation is a mark of distinction that helps families find the best possible care and educational experience for their children. Programs that are NAEYC accredited demonstrate their commitment to go beyond the state's minimum licensing requirements by meeting rigorous national standards in health, safety, administration and teacher qualifications, curriculum, communication, and community involvement. To maintain the accreditation, programs must continually exceed high national child care standards and go through the re-accreditation process every five years.

The number of Early Childhood Education degree candidates who completed practicum and student observation hours at PIC last year.



### **Investing in Future Teachers:**

A student observer from the Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) was surprised to find that on a recent rainy day there were children at PIC running and jumping in puddles for 45 minutes. She had not expected anyone to go outside, yet admitted that she had never had so much fun watching children "in action." According to her instructor at CCP, there is no reading assignment that can match the learning that took place when this student shared her experience with her classmates. Terri Lynne Lokoff Child Care Foundation's 2014 Lois B. Cohan Museums-to-Go grant award enabled us to offer our early learners an engaging educational program. In December, The Franklin Institute's Travel Science Team arrived at PIC to give nearly 100 toddlers and preschoolers a dynamic presentation, entitled "Sillly, Shadow, Crazy Color," where they explored changing color and light in different mediums. After a mesmerizing light show, each preschooler was given a Ziploc bag filled with different colors of paint. They were encouraged to mix and observe. *THANK YOU TLLCCF for helping us enrich early learning at PIC.* 

## Quality Shows | Professional Educators

This past year, PIC implemented a plan to meet the latest educational requirements of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). In 2014, 20 PIC teachers began or are continuing work towards associate and bachelor's degrees in Early Childhood Education. What we see is an early education field that will be transformed and PIC teachers who will be well prepared to help children learn through play.



Working with young children helps me soar in school because I have firsthand knowledge. Nicole Williams Lead Teacher



My literacy classes directly relate to working with this age group. It is helpful to gain knowledge in the latest research and best practices. Brooks Wilson Lead Teacher



Going to school taught me what quality care was all about and made me want to be a better teacher. I am happy to have completed my bachelor's degree and have plans to pursue my master's degree.

Demita Hill Lead Teacher

## PIC Teacher Earns National Recognition

We are thrilled to share that PIC Grasshoppers Teacher Nichole McLeer is a recipient of the 2015 Terri Lynne Lokoff/Children's TYLENOL® National Child Care Teacher Award.

Child care teachers from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. Military bases around the world apply for this annual award. Each applicant must design

a classroom enhancement project illustrating the educational, social, and emotional benefits of the activities.

Nichole's application included her project entitled, *Full STEAM Ahead: Weaving Together the Languages of Science, Art, and Math.* Her goal is to create more opportunities to facilitate connections and experiences in science, technology, art, and math (STEAM) in her preschool room.

As an award recipient, Nichole will receive funding for her project. She looks forward to integrating more science and technology with a portable light table and microscope. She is excited to expand her class library with new books that feature art, science



Watching these changes take place in the Grasshopper classroom is really what it's all about.

-Nichole McLeer, PIC Teacher

and math. And, she is eager to help the children find a deeper connection with nature and art by working with clay.

When asked about receiving the grant award, Nichole said, "I'm so excited to bring these items into our classroom. I'm eager to see what the children do, how they interact with these new tools, and how they interact with each other. Watching these changes take place in the Grasshopper classroom is really what it's all about."

Nichole is one of 50 child care teachers who will be honored at a ceremony at the Please Touch Museum in April. *We are so proud of her accomplishment!* 



Many early education teachers go back to school with the help of the Rising STARS Tuition Assistance Program, which significantly covers tuition costs for early educators. We are grateful to the Commonwealth for recognizing the importance of continued education for those in the Early Childhood field. Early education professionals earn significantly less than their colleagues teaching in primary and secondary schools. The Rising STARS program has a major impact on the pursuit of higher degrees in our field.

## Quality Shows | Thanks to Our Friends

We appreciate the generous gifts we have received from individual donors, as well as support from area businesses, organizations, and civic institutions. While we are unable to recognize you all by name in this publication, **please check the online** *Neighborhood News Spring 2015* edition for a complete list of our friends and supporters from 2014. Visit PIC's website at parentinfantcenter.org and click on "News and Events."

## Thanking the Magic Circle Makers



On a beautiful fall day in early October, PIC recognized and thanked the many supporters who helped us create the *Magic Circle Nature Playground* with a special breakfast and ceremony. In honor of the generosity of PIC's friends, families, and alumni, three magnificent metal butterfly sculptures have been mounted and placed in the playground above where children work on natureinspired art, gather for picnics, and share stories

shaded by large trees. PIC Executive Director Debbie Green welcomed everyone to

the nature playground and explained the important role outdoor education and nature play in early childhood development. PIC Board President Carol Lerner took a moment to thank everyone for the role they played in this project.

A beautiful wooden sign has been specially designed by PIC friend and artist Rob Fedirko to fit in the natural landscape and will be installed on the playground later this year.

There are so many people whose gifts and contributions made this project possible. PIC is especially grateful for the leadership gifts made by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, a generous community partner and friend of PIC; Rebecca and Arthur Samberg, dear friends of former Executive Director Marni Sweet; and the Germeshausen Foundation with its strong interest in teaching children the importance of our environment. I live very close to the ... original Magic Circle so loved by Marni [Sweet]. I went down there today and sat in the sunshine remembering ... Marni's enthusiasm...and her love for work at PIC and the kids!\*

—words of a Magic Circle donor

\*PIC's Magic Circle Nature Playground is named after a beloved play space of former PIC Executive Director Marni Sweet.



### Leadership Gifts

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Rebecca and Arthur Samberg Germeshausen Foundation

### Groundbreaking & Strong Support

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In honor of Cindy Roberts Jason and Carol Lerner Karl and Nancy Schultz David Silver and Deirdre Woods Jan Verhage

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### Special In-kind Support

Arbor Day Foundation Julie A. Bush The Fedirko Family Larry Leso LRSLAstudio Pennoni Associates Inc. Josey and Earl Stamm ThinkGreen The Woodlands

## Original Mosaic Installed at PIC



Josey and Earl Stamm, both now retired artists, created a beautiful nature-themed mosaic to be the top of the art table in the newly-completed *Magic Circle Nature Playground*. The mosaic, which came to PIC in two pieces, was installed on site. The design of this table top, which includes a large tree, is perfect for young learners whose outdoor art projects will be inspired by nature all around them. The letters "PIC" have been incorporated into the design. *Why not build literacy skills, too!* Josey and Earl hope everyone enjoys using the table in all sorts of creative ways. We are grateful to them for this beautiful masterpiece!



### ArtStart 2014 was "Enchanting"

October's ArtStart 2014 was an evening in an "Enchanted Garden." Over 200 guests—families, friends, and alumni of PIC—had the opportunity to dine, socialize, view a magnificent display of children's artwork inspired by the natural world, and bid on unique auction items and packages. **This year's event was a great success, raising over \$28,000!** 

The night featured an elaborate buffet dinner donated by our friend and neighbor Alex Yuen, owner of West Philadelphia's **Beijing Restaurant**. There were also a host of additional food and beverage sponsors who served up wonderful array of appetizers and drinks.

We are very grateful for support from

### #Giving Tuesday Kicked Off PIC's Annual Fund

This year was PIC's first time participating in **#GivingTuesday**, which launched our end-of-the-year fundraising.

Created in 2012, #GivingTuesday follows Thanksgiving, Black Friday, and Cyber Monday, with a day dedicated to giving back.

PIC friends, families, and alumni posted on social media, sent emails, talked to friends and families, shared #UNselfies, and gave generously to PIC.

Our 2014 end-of-the year Annual

**Deirdre Woods Technology Advisors**, sponsor of the 2014 Program Book.

The evening included a video featuring children in PIC's *Magic Circle Nature Playground*, and a "Wish Garden," which gave our guests the chance to fulfill the wishes of our classrooms by purchasing paper flowers.

ArtStart is one of PIC's two events dedicated to raising the funds needed for our tuition assistance program. Because of its success, PIC will be able to help families struggling with the cost of child care through its tuition assistance program, and maintain the rich early learning experiences and quality school-age programming that all children deserve.

Fund Campaign raised \$18,000 (including #GivingTuesday dollars), which will be used to enhance PIC programs, fund special activities in the classroom, purchase books and other educational materials, make facility improvements, and other projects to help provide the highest quality child care programs and strengthen our community. We are fortunate to have such supportive friends who share our commitment to children and young families.

### **Tuition Assistance**

In 1986, PIC established a tuition assistance fund to help families who earn too much to qualify for federal or state subsidized care, but not enough to comfortably afford the cost of tuition. In 2014, the revenue from PIC's two fundraising events helped 25 PIC families with the cost of care.

PIC also enrolls families who receive subsidized child care through the CCIS and Pre-K Counts programs. Each year, the gap between government subsidy and the true cost of care for a child in a high quality center like PIC grows. Our annual fundraising efforts help close this gap and allow us to welcome families from a variety of income levels.

### Other ways to support PIC

Expand the size of your gift by asking if your company has a matching gift program. Designate PIC to receive your gift to the United Way or Penn's Way Campaigns by using our number: 02671. Kindly remember us in your estate planning. For more information on these and other ways to support PIC, please contact Development Manager Karen Stachelek at 215-222-5480 or send an email to kstachelek@ parentinfantcenter.org.

### Facility & Technology Upgrades



In 2014, we completed an extensive renovation of our Stucco Building, home to our After School program, and made significant improvements to two toddler rooms in the Spruce Building. We plan to continue to make facility upgrades each year so that all PIC children enjoy bright, clean, healthy, and safe environments.

We have upgraded our technology capabilities by installing fifteen wireless access points (WAPs) throughout PIC to enable internet access from all of our rooms. It is the first step in our commitment to getting technology into each classroom. Before the end of the year, we also implemented a new text/email messaging service allowing us to quickly get in touch with all our families regarding school closings and other important center-wide messages that need to be broadcast.

#### OUR GRATITUDE: We are very grateful for the support of our friends whose generous contributions we received in 2014

James and Martha Aguiar in memory of Jasper Allred Linda and Ronald Althoff in honor of Julie Bush Linda Amsterdam Andrew Ang and Nasha Kanai Jacquelyn Aveta and James Gentile Margaret and David Balamuth Lori Basher in memory of Aleksander Grill Vivian Begley Pratima and Ashish Behari Phyllis Belk Ashish and Pragati Bhargava Frances Biddle in honor of Cindy Roberts Mac and Judith Borie Hob and Holly Brooks Raymond Brown and Sachina Lyons-Brown Seth Budick and Fatimah Johnson Julie and Barry Bush James and Diane Calkins Craig Carnaroli and Amie Thornton Brendan Carr and Sarah Winters Rotonya and Tyree Carr Adrienne Chapman and Peter Cline Channtoo Chhean Louise Christopher Tamara Clark Barbara Cohen in honor of Elizabeth Pokempner Jodi Cohen Matthew Cohen and Sarah Busis Amanda Conley Fran Crowley and Nancy McCafferty-Crowley Alison and Matthew Culyba Jeff Curry and Angela Kweon Curry Delphine Dahan Gabriel Dattatrevan and Karin Hilfiker Charles and Susan Davidson in honor of Steve Pogarsky John and Helen Davies Stephen Davis and Nina Hope in memory of Marni Sweet Amy and Chris Dean Bill Dean Krystyna Dereszowska Bonnie and Steve Devlin **Charles Dickens** Mayva and Jeffrey Donnon Joyce Dubow Charles and Beth Emerson Diane Merry and Steven Fakharzadeh Drew Faust and Charles Rosenberg in memory of Marni Sweet Rob and Mary Beth Fedirko in honor of Myles Fedirko Brett and Jennifer Feldman Phyllis Fineman

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# Part of the Community



**Information and Advocacy:** Through advocacy efforts, PIC provides families, alumni, and friends information on early education and school age policy and programming in the state and the country.

In October, with help from our friend, Representative Jim Roebuck, PIC hosted its first *Lights on Afterschool* event. After decorating the inside of their classroom, we



talked about the importance of quality after school programs like PIC. We lit a ceremonial "tree," which remained lit through the night to show our neighbors that we were participating in this nation-wide call to celebrate after school programs and emphasize the need for more quality programs throughout the country.

In other school-age news, PIC Director of School Age Programs Anjali Gallup-Diaz has been recognized by the Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool Youth Development Network (PSAYDN) for her dedication to high quality after school programs. Anjali, along with 15 fellow educators across the Commonwealth, was selected as a **2015 PSAYDN After School Ambassador** to advocate for the importance of quality after school programs like PIC to policymakers and government officials in Harrisburg and Washington.

In 2014, PIC was pleased to participate and support the *Pre-K for PA* Campaign in its work to make increased access to high-quality pre-kindergarten a top priority during this crucial election year. With a new governor in office, we remain committed to fighting for all PA's young children and will continue our work with *Pre-K for PA* so that, "every 3- and 4-year-old in Pennsylvania will have access to highquality pre-K."

## Warming Up for the PIC Plant Sale

Each year, as the weather warms, PIC helps West Philadelphia go green with our Spring Plant Sale, a neighborhood tradition for more than 30 years!

We will soon mobilize the PIC community—*families, alumni, friends, and staff*—to sell plants, organize volunteers, fill hundreds of plant orders, and turn the chapel next door to PIC into a "pop-up" garden center for a cause!

This year, PIC Plant Sale days will be on Friday, May 1 and Saturday, May 2. The PIC Plant Sale online store at picplantsale.org will open on March 15. There you will find an amazing selection of annuals, perennials, herbs, fruits & veggies, and hanging baskets. This online shopping experience is easy-to-use and convenient for payment. People who prefer to pay by cash or check, can place orders online and mail or bring payment to PIC.

The event's success will be driven by a month-long Pre-Sale Campaign, which ends on April 15. We can't do it without you!! Please reach out to your family, neighbors, and colleagues...*email a link to PIC's Plant Sale store to everyone you know!* 

Please contact Development Manager Karen Stachelek via email at kstachelek@parentinfantcenter.org or call 215-222-5480 with any questions.

Plant Sale revenue supports PIC's tuition assistance program, which makes tuition more affordable to families with limited income and encourages diversity within our community. *See you in the spring!* 

DEADLINE to order plants is APRIL 15



2015 Spring Plant Sale Sale Days: May 1 & 2

Pre-Sales: March 15 - April 15 Annuals, Perennials, Houseplants, Herbs, Fruits & Veggies, Hanging Baskets, and more! Pre-Order by April 15 for best selection parentinfantcenter.org