

Whistle Stop's Parent Connection

April-May 2008

Welcome New Staff

Erika Balkwill has joined the Whistle Stop staff as a full-time teacher assistant. She will be working with Mae in the Young Explorer Room as a replacement for Ed.

Erika graduated from the University of West Florida. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary Social Sciences with a concentration in education, social work, and history. She enjoys puzzles, reading, mountain biking, and going out for coffee. Welcome Erika!

Parents Welcome For Lunch

Parents occasionally ask if they can come and join their child for lunch at Whistle Stop. Yes, parents are more than welcome to come. Please let your child's teacher know in advance if you plan to come. We encourage you to enjoy this kind of opportunity.

Keep in mind it may be harder for the younger children - Sweet Peas - to say goodbye, but the older children could make the transition more easily.

Kindergarten Readiness Information Session

On **Wednesday, April 16, 2008, at 5:00 PM** Whistle Stop will host an informational session for parents whose children are preparing for kindergarten.

It will be a round table discussion about what to expect, with the opportunity to ask questions. It is open to all parents and will be **held in the Young Explorer room.**

What's Our School Age Program About?

Whistle Stop offers a fun summer program for school age children from 6-12 years old. It features fun activities, arts and crafts, and special events each week.

Some of the features are pizza days, ice cream truck visits, and catered lunches (offered year round). Students go on 2 field trips every week and have 3 pool outings each week on Marywood's campus. Marywood hires a certified life guard to oversee this program.

This is a very popular program and is in high demand, so it is

important to get your registration form in early. These forms have already been sent out to school age families. If you did not receive one or know of others who might be interested, please call or e-mail Toni to request a form.

Reminders

Whistle Stop will be closed on Monday, May 26 for Memorial Day.

Also, please **keep your child's snow boots and extra clothes (especially pants) at Whistle Stop.** Even though there is no snow, the ground is still soft and muddy and can be slippery.

T-Shirts For Sale

We're having a spring **Whistle Stop t-shirt sale.** Original price was \$10, they are now \$6 and an additional one for a sibling is only \$5 more. If you'd like one (or more), see Toni or place a note in the billing box for her.

Staff Birthdays

Sue Zimmerman – May 10

There are no staff birthdays in April.

Reminder

New tuition rates will take effect the week of April 21st.

A memo was sent out last month about the new tuition rates, and you should have received a reminder notice letting you know about the upcoming change.

Summer Schedules

By now you will have received a **form confirming your child's summer schedule.** Please complete this and return it as soon as possible. It is due back **May 2.**

If your child will be leaving for the summer but returning in the fall, you must fill out a **secure space form. This form, along with a \$50 holding fee must be turned in before your child leaves for the summer.** You may request one of these forms from Toni, and if you have any questions, call or e-mail Toni.

Staff Training Update

The **Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children** (MiAEYC) held their annual conference on April 10-12, 2008, at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel. This three-day conference offered some great seminars and information about working with young children.

This year, the following staff attended: **Sue, Andrea, Phyllis, Debbie, Karin, Mae and Toni.**

Whistle Stop staff members have attended this annual conference for the last 15 years. It's a great opportunity to learn new things and network with other childcare professionals.

Also this month, Whistle Stop will complete a First Aid and CPR recertification training session for all staff. This is scheduled to take place in late April.

Caution: Slow Down!

We are receiving a lot of complaints about people driving too fast along the driveways and parking lots near Whistle Stop. **The majority of the concerns target the areas by the Senior Building.**

The speed limit is 5 MPH in the parking lots and 15 MPH along the driveways.

This has been an ongoing problem. The Dominican Sisters are very upset and ready to take new steps to curb this problem (tickets?).

Please cooperate with us to insure safety for all families and to keep goodwill between Whistle Stop and the Dominican Sisters. Thank you.

April - Month of the Young Child

April is the **"Month of the Young Child"**. Whistle Stop is planning some wonderful activities during the weeks of April 21 and 28. We will have

special entertainment for the children, an ice cream social, and special days to wear a certain color (i.e. "wear purple day").

We will honor staff with a potluck lunch on **Tuesday, April 29** which parents can contribute to. There will also be purple ribbons for parents to wear to promote April as Month of the Young Child. These will be available in each building – be sure to take one to help promote this special occasion.

We are looking for someone with special talents (music, story telling, art, clowning, etc.) to entertain the children as part of this celebration. We are open to ideas. If you or someone you know would like to share their talents, please let Toni know.

More details about the activity schedule will be coming from your child's teacher.

Fun For All Ages

Mini-Museum

Gather six or so small or large empty milk cartons. Cut the tops off the cartons and glue or staple them together so the openings are all facing the same way. Let your child create a "museum" by filling the spaces with a collection of items: rocks, leaves, flowers, or whatever she chooses.

She might choose a collection of all the same thing or a collection of related items like those that are beautiful, hard, soft, etc. She might display a permanent collection, or a temporary exhibit

that changes from time to time.

Fun for All Ages cont'd

Building Materials

Consider getting different building materials for children to experiment with.

One type includes PVC pipe in different lengths to build ramps and marble runs. Add elbows, T's and other shapes for more twists and turns.

Another idea is to gather sticks of different lengths on your next nature walk and use them to build bridges for caterpillars or small cars.

Outdoor Science - Feed the Birds

Here are some easy feeders to make. Be sure to hang them near a sturdy branch so your guests have a place to land.

Tasty Toast: Help your child spread peanut butter on a piece of toast. Cut the toast into a fun shape with a large cookie cutter, then poke a hole in the top with a skewer or straw. Press the peanut butter side into a plate full of seeds. Thread a ribbon through the hole, knot the ends, and hang.

Pine Cone Surprise: Smear peanut butter onto a pine cone until well coated. Give your child a Ziplock bag filled with birdseed, then have him shake the pine cone in the bag until it's thoroughly covered with seeds. Tie a piece of ribbon around the end of the pine cone, knot the

ends, and hang.

Coney Island Treat: Let your child nibble a small hole in the tip of a sugar cone or poke a hole with a skewer in the flat bottom of a wafer cone. Spread peanut butter on the cone and roll it in birdseed. Thread the ends of a ribbon into the hole, make a knot too large to slip back out, and hang.

*Variation: Use bacon grease or honey for children allergic to peanuts.

"Fun For All Ages" is taken from:

News & Views

Kent Regional 4C
233 E. Fulton Suite 107
Grand Rapids, MI 49503