

Whistle Stop's

Parent Connection

January-February 2009

New Faces

We welcome **Debbie Vander Molen** to Whistle Stop. Debbie, Toni's sister, is a substitute staff person for the Junior Building. She started on staff with us in November. Welcome Debbie.

Patty Baragar is a new part-time staff person working mostly in the Senior Building. Patty will be filling in for vacations and spring break coverage. She is a student at Grand Valley State University.

Whistle Stop welcomes back **Molly Bowman** to our staff. Molly is a senior at Grand Valley State University and has returned from student teaching in Ecuador. She will be working part-time in the Senior Building.

Extra! Extra!

Kotoe Laackman, former full-time staff person at Whistle Stop (in the Sweet Peas room), is expecting a baby in July. We have enjoyed having her on our staff and we now wish her all the best with her family. Congratulations!

Reminder

During this cold and snowy season, we're finding that the mittens children wear outdoors in the morning do not dry by the afternoon. Because the children regularly go outdoors twice a day, we're asking that you **bring a second pair of mittens for your child** to use while at Whistle Stop.

We find that mittens generally work better than gloves in keeping the children's hands warm and they're easier for the children to put on by themselves. Layering clothing under their outerwear does a great job keeping the children warm throughout the day, too.

6:00 PM Closing Time

Whistle Stop's closing time is 6:00 PM. This means that everyone needs to have gathered their belongings, signed out, and have **left the building by 6:00 PM.** Many of our staff have other commitments after they leave Whistle Stop and cannot stay past 6:00 PM. Please allow yourself enough time (especially

in this weather) to gather your child's things, connect with staff, and leave the building **by 6:00 PM.** With your cooperation, we can avoid charging late fees for anyone who stays past 6:00 PM. Thank you.

Closing Information

If Whistle Stop closes due to severe weather, the decision is made independently of any school district. We are not tied in to any particular school district when closing is necessary, therefore, you should tune in to **channel TV 8 or TV 13** to obtain this information.

Staff Birthdays and Anniversaries

There are no staff birthdays in January.

February Birthdays

Maryann Glynn – February 2

There are no staff anniversaries in January or February.

Staff Development

Update

The following staff attended the 35th Annual Kent Regional 4C Early Childhood Conference on Saturday January 17, 2009: **Barbara, Lisa, Amy, Gloria and Marian.**

This year's theme "**Take the Strain Off! Let's Celebrate!**" featured two keynote speakers and several workshops on topics such as implementing programs to develop vocabulary in infants and toddlers, praise vs. encouragement, on-line record-keeping, and adding music and movement to the daily routine.

Each year, our staff members need to complete 12 hours of training as required by the state of Michigan. Whistle Stop has done this faithfully for the last 15 years and highly values the education and training of our staff.

2009 To-Do List

1. Goal Setting – Our staff works to set annual goals for the center as a whole, goals for each room, and goals for the individual staff members.

2. Staff Training – each year our staff has to complete 12 hours of training in child development as required for all child care centers by the state of Michigan.

3. Accreditation – Each year Toni must submit a report to NAEYC on how Whistle Stop is achieving the standards that were established for our accreditation.

Also, **during the month of January** we will be asking parents **to review and update their child's enrollment papers.** These include your emergency card information and your child's medical form.

Congratulations!

Congratulations go to **Sue Zimmerman** who received her associates degree from the acclaimed **National Childhood Development Institute of Washington D.C.**

Sue completed her course work for this degree here at Grand Rapids Community College and received her degree in late December, 2008. All of her hard work over the past 2 years has paid off! Congratulations, Sue!

Tax ID Information

Whistle Stop's tax ID number is:

38-2806644

Year-end tax statements are available upon request. You may leave a note in the payment box or log onto our website by typing in: www.whistlestopchildcare.net.

Click on "contact us" and leave an e-mail for Toni with your request.

Welcome

New Families

Whistle Stop would like to welcome the following new children and their families:

Sweet Peas

Mandie Mary Grace Norton (Cecelia)(full-time) - sister of Katolina and Devon

The following children will be starting in February:

Sweet Peas

Nikola Gjorgiewski (Sasko and Danche) (part-time)

Cara Pazdernik (Charles and Miriam) (full-time)

Jumping Jacks

Natalie Kwiatkowski (Kevin and Maria) (part-time)

New Siblings

Megan Carpenter (Scott and Stephanie) welcomed a new brother on January 15, 2009. Kyle Edward was adopted from Korea and is the newest member of the Carpenter family. Congratulations!

High/Scope Program Highlight

Planning Time

Usually in the fall or after a room transition, the children are divided into groups. Each group has one adult who works with them on a regular basis. The children remain in these groups for most of the year. This builds consistency, community, and a sense of trust within the group.

Staff try to organize the groups to include children at various levels of development. This promotes language skills and provides modeling for the younger children.

At planning time, the adult in each group gives each child an opportunity to choose what they will do for "work time". They try to use creative means to do this; for example, having the child draw a picture of the area they will work in or "calling" the child on a play telephone to hear their plans.

Planning time is a great opportunity for children to practice making choices and initiating their own play.

Article - Making the Most of Mealtime

Experts agree that having regular meals together as a

family offers many benefits. This can be challenging given busy schedules and after-school activities, but it can be done. Ideally, a family should eat a meal together five nights a week. However, if this is not possible, even one or two nights a week can bring benefits.

Some helpful tips for making the most of mealtimes:

-Turn off the TV. This allows your family to have meaningful conversations and avoid distractions.

-Keep it simple. Meals do not have to be elaborate. Offer pizza with a salad or bring home take-out and add a side of fresh fruit. Another great option is using a crock-pot. With a little planning and prep time in the morning, you can come home to a hot meal with enough for the whole family. Also, when making a family favorite, make a double recipe and freeze the second portion for later.

-Allow children to help with meals. Younger children can set the table, wash vegetables, and help stir (away from the stove). Older children can take turns chopping vegetables or helping to prepare portions of the meal. Letting them choose what's on the menu one night a week is a great way to include them, too. The more children are involved, the more invested they will be in mealtime.

-Give each person time to share about their day. It can be as simple as asking each person what the best part of his or her day was. Ask open-ended questions to avoid the "uh-huh" and "nope" that you might otherwise receive. One option is to ask each person to share the high point and low point of his or her day. This allows children the opportunity to discuss things that they might otherwise avoid if asked directly. A helpful rule is to have everyone listen to the person who is sharing and not allow criticism or unkind remarks to be spoken.

Studies show that children who share regular family meals eat healthier diets, get better grades in school, and are more open about what's going on in their lives. They are also less likely to be obese or enter into risky behavior later on.

Many children and teens like knowing they can count on the stability and structure that regular family mealtimes provide. The best part of sharing meals together on a regular basis is the bonding that can occur over time as you make family mealtimes a priority.