

Good News Gazette

December 2010-January 2011

Ch-ch-changes!

A year ago we unveiled our new and improved website – updates included video tours of each center, a resource library with recipes, and our entire collection of Purple Pages, Active Learning Brochures, and Parent manual. Our website blog is updated regularly, and parents can receive updates via the RSS feed button. We also have a Parent Calendar for keeping track of center activities.

The biggest change was still under construction when the new format was revealed, but we now have our Myhouse pages up and running. We are very excited about this new service for parents, so please take note! Each center has its own Myhouse page. Check with your child's teacher for the username and password information.

In January, we will be shifting to primarily web-based communications for our room and center news. This means that information you need for room news and upcoming center events, including a calendar, will be available on our website. Hard copies of various notices will continue to be posted on bulletin boards, but our goal is to eliminate the multiple papers that go home in backpacks and bags.

This change will save many resources: paper, ink, *and time*. It will also centralize all the info parents need in one location that will be available 24/7. Teachers from each classroom (and center Directors) will post reminders, information about events, and curriculum info once a week on their MyHouse pages. MyHouse posts will replace the monthly newsletters and calendars that have been sent home in hard copy or electronic format.

Staff will still send occasional e-mails with important information, as well as regular reminders to check MyHouse on the GH website, as parents make the shift to the new system. Expect e-mails and posted notices with directions as your center makes the transition.

We'd also like to invite parents to become a fan of our Facebook page.

Our page gets a lot of traffic, and it's another way to stay connected.

We appreciate parents' feedback as we make this transition. Feel free to share your ideas with your center Director. Our goal is to provide accurate, easy-to-access information. Let us know how we're doing!

Heidi McFadden

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In This Issue

- 2011 Contracts 3
- Closing Due to Inclement Weather 7
- CPR/First Aid..... 7
- First Grade Responses .. 6
- GH Graduate in the News 7
- Important Notes 2
- Neighborhood News.... 3
- Parking Lot Safety 6
- Staff News 8
- Upcoming Events 6





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Important Notes

Winter Break

All Gretchen's House Centers will be **closed December 24- 31**. We will reopen again on Monday, January 3, 2011. If your family will be gone before or after the break, please let us know in advance. Many teachers request time off during the holidays. Substitutes are in short supply at this time of year so it helps us to know if attendance will be low.

Morning preschool will not be in session on December 20-23. We will resume our regular schedule on Monday, January 3, 2011.

No Public School Days

The Ann Arbor Public Schools will be closed 12/20-31. School resumes on Monday, 1/3/11. Our winter holiday coincides with some of these dates, but we will offer full day care for kindergarten and school age children on December 20-23. Sign up sheets are posted in the Young 5s and school-age rooms.

Holiday Parties

It's that time again! Mark your calendars and join us for our center **holiday party**. Each center has its own traditions, so check your parent bulletin board for details.

Mt. Vernon	12/17
Mt. Pleasant	12/4
Stadium	<i>in February</i>
WISD	12/17
Traver	12/16
Oak Valley	12/16
Dhu Varren	
Pond Wing	12/13
Railroad Wing	12/14
Farm Wing	12/16

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – Centers Closed

Please take note that all Gretchen's House Centers will be closed on Monday, January 17, 2011. We made this change last year, and it was very successful. Staff will be busy with mid-year training, and the day will replace three "work Saturdays" that were previously required of all staff. We appreciate parent support of our staff training time.

Outdoor Clothing Needed

Cold weather is here! Please send your child to school with the **appropriate outdoor gear**, because we go outside every day, unless the wind chill is below 0°. At this time of year, each child needs:

- a warm coat
- snow pants
- waterproof mittens
- hat
- snow boots
- slippers or "inside only" shoes

We also recommend having 2-3 extra pairs of socks along with size and weather-appropriate extra clothes in your child's cubby. We are working on establishing a good supply of extra outdoor gear at each center. If you have gently used coats, snowpants, gloves or boots that your child has outgrown, please consider donating them to our "extras" box. Any surplus that we receive will be donated to the Salvation Army's coat drive. Thanks for helping us make outdoor play more convenient and comfortable for all of our children!

If you are interested in learning more about our approach to **outdoor play**, please ask your teacher for a copy of the **purple page** on the subject.



Neighborhood News

Many **GH-Mt Pleasant** parents and grandparents joined the children and teachers on a beautiful fall day in October to have a delicious fall snack and walk up to the GH-Mt. Vernon center to visit friends and siblings. The teachers and children created an apple "Kids Cook" to share with their parents and families had a chance to visit and watch the children play together on the new playground.

GH-Traver's harvest festival was in November. For the harvest festival, the children made apple crisp, pumpkin muffins and fruit dip. Parent volunteers painted faces and helped build a scarecrow. The children also enjoyed rolling gourds down the big hill.

During the first week of November the **GH-Stadium** center celebrated Fall with costumes, a children's chili cook, and a pumpkin hunt.

GH-Mt Vernon participated in a food collection project for the Food Gatherers Organization. Members of the "Kid's Care Club", who are actually former Mt. Vernon students, collected non-perishable canned

and dry goods that were delivered to Food Gatherers before the holidays.

GH-Traver's GSRP Preschool room enjoyed a successful parent breakfast in November. Parents were able to stay and eat pancakes and fruit with their child at drop off time.

GH-Stadium Rose Ridge toddlers made muffin treats and took them to our local Comerica bank.

During October and November **GH-Stadium** preschoolers collected donations for the Huron Valley Humane Society.

The school-age room at **GH-Traver** enjoyed a trip to the Scrap Box during a no public school day. Items were chosen by the kids and purchased for the art area. Creativity soared upon return!

GH-WISD collected leftover Halloween candy and donated it to the Education Project for Homeless Youth.

In honor of the giving season, Infants and Toddlers of **GH-Traver** helped prepare muffins for a breakfast to go.



These staff members are celebrating Gretchen's House anniversaries this December and January!

	<i>Years</i>
Heike Hampel	13
Kathleen Lovernick	12
Lea Augustine	12
Elizabeth Bedolla	11
Christine Kluck	7
Christa Kemp	6
Zarina Syed	6
Tanya Arksey	5
Carrie McMurrian	5
Kelly Potter	4
Nevatte Willis	3
Danielle Wiener	3
Crystal Lisabeth	2
Whitney Haynes	2
Jessica Landgraf	1
Jessica Broich	1
Amanda Kardiff	1
Chelsea Phillips	1
Elisa Jacobs	1
Marjorie Maguire	1
Hanh Bui	1
Erica Schrodt	1

2011 Contracts

All currently enrolled families should have received a new child care contract for 2011 in November. These contracts reflect rates and days the centers will be closed for January-December, 2011. Contracts for 2011 were due to the office by December 1st. If you have questions about your schedule or fees, see your center director as soon as possible.

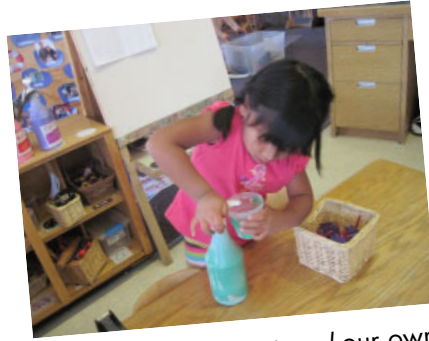
Please note that January billing statements will go out before we close on December 23rd. Payments are due when centers reopen on January 3, 2011. Late fees will be assessed for payments made after January 10th.



Physical Development



Singing and laughing together is a great way to spend time with friends! (GH-Learning Children's Community)



We pump our own paint and our own soap. Learning to do things ourselves, then cleaning up afterward, helps us build confidence—and it's fun! (GH-Oak Valley)



Helping clean the table teaches us good habits, but we just think it's fun to be like our teachers and work with our friends! (GH-Dhu Varren)



We made a work station out of the crates, but sometimes you have to get right down in the sand to get the job done! (GH-Traver)



Our pumpkin patch field trip was a multi-step process: We rode on the GH bus, we took a wagon ride into the field, and when we got home, we painted the pumpkins we picked! Next step – pumpkin pie?! (GH-Mt. Vernon)



Upside down or right side up: Friends have more fun when they're together! (GH-WISD)



Playing in the leaves is lots of fun—we're looking forward to playing in the snow! (GH-Traver)



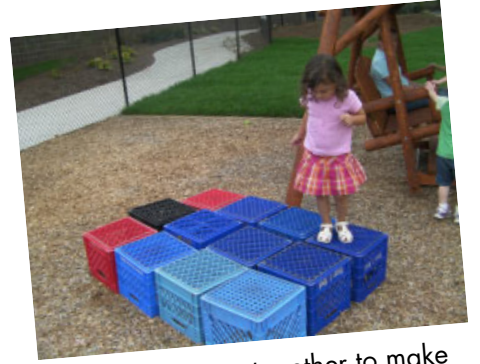
The ramp makes things go faster—including me! (GH-WISD)



Moving the logs uses all of my big muscles; I sleep well at naptime after working this hard! (GH-Stadium)



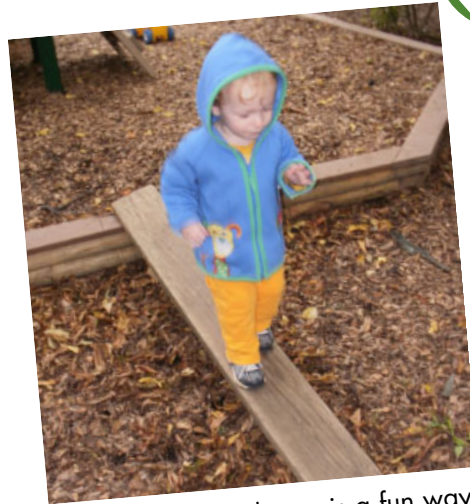
Throwing a bean bag and catching it with a Frisbee takes a lot of hand-eye coordination! (GH-Oak Valley)



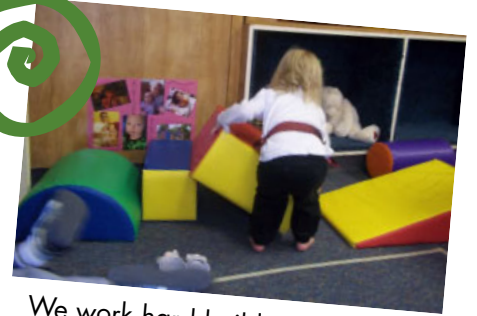
We put the crates together to make a stage! (GH-Learning Children's Community)



Moving the crates and making a train takes a lot of work—we have to use our words, cooperate with our friends, and push really hard! (GH-Dhu Varren)



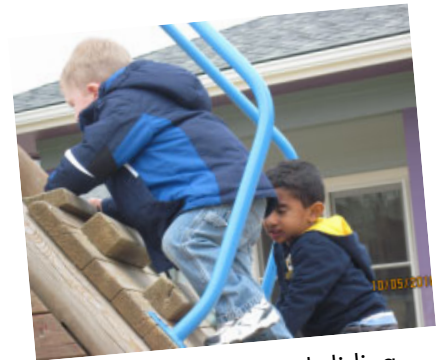
Balancing on the beam is a fun way to practice walking in a very straight line—my arms help me balance! (GH-Mt. Pleasant)



We work hard building, then taking it apart and building it again! (GH-WISD)



Walking on the "path" helps us work on balance, and we're stretching our brain muscles, too! (GH-Mt. Vernon)



Climbing up the slide and sliding down makes me use the muscles in my arms and legs, but I'm also exercising the parts of my brain that will help me solve math problems and read words when I'm older! (GH-Dhu Varren)



We're wiping the noses of our stuffed animals. Don't forget to wash your hands, too! (GH-Stadium)



Pushing my friend in the basket is a lot of work – next time I get to sit inside! (GH-Mt. Pleasant)





Parking Lot Safety

Please drive slowly through the parking lot at our centers, even if you don't see children nearby. This is especially important during the upcoming winter months, when ice patches may be present, despite our efforts to keep the parking lots clear.

Gretchen's House has a snow removal service, and staff work extra hard to keep the walkways clear and lightly salted during cold weather. You can help us by notifying the office when the parking lot needs attention.

Young children or infants should not be left in unattended cars, even if they are asleep in car seats.

Finally, we ask that you not leave your car running unattended in the parking lot. Although they are rare, tragic accidents do occur when children are left alone, and when cars are left running unattended. We want to maintain a safe environment, inside and outside of our centers.

First Grade Responses

A first grade teacher presented her students with the first half of a well-known proverb and asked them to come up with the remainder of the proverb. We thought you might enjoy their responses:

1. Don't change horses...*until they stop running.*
2. Strike while the...*bug is close.*
3. It's always darkest before...*Daylight Savings Time.*
4. Never underestimate the power of...*termites.*
5. You can lead a horse to water but...*how?*
6. Don't bite the hand that...*looks dirty.*
7. No news is...*impossible.*
8. A miss is as good as a...*Mr.*
9. You can't teach an old dog new...*math.*
10. Love all, trust...*me.*
11. If you lie down with dogs, you'll...*stink in the morning.*
12. The pen is mightier than the...*pigs.*
13. Happy is the bride who...*gets all the presents.*
14. Where there's smoke there's...*pollution.*
15. An idle mind is...*the best way to relax.*
16. A penny saved is...*not much.*
17. Two's company, three's...*the Musketeers.*
18. Don't put off till tomorrow what...*you put on to go to bed.*
19. Laugh and the whole world laughs with you, cry and...*you have to blow your nose.*
21. Children should be seen and not...*spanked or grounded.*
22. If at first you don't succeed...*get new batteries.*
23. You get out of something only what you...*see in the picture on the box.*
24. When the blind lead the blind...*get out of the way.*



Upcoming Events

The **GH-Mt. Pleasant** teachers will host an all-center family breakfast at the Mt. Vernon center on Saturday, December 4th from 9:00-10:30. All Baby House families are welcome to attend—the teachers look forward to making breakfast and having time to visit with each of the families.

GH-Dhu Varren will collect toys, games, art supplies and other item SOS needs for their child care program. Time for TOTs is the SOS child care program that provides temporary care for families in crisis. Please watch for the gift tag displays in your child's wing. Thank you so much for supporting families in need.

The **GH-Stadium** center will celebrate a Winter Festival in February. They will have pancakes, activities, and lighted walks in the snow.

Reprinted from The Well-Centered Child.

Just a Quick Thank you!



Gretchen's House families,

I just wanted to send a quick thank you to all of you who were able to donate food to the Food Gatherers/ Kids Care Club in these last few weeks. The kids learned a lot about Food Gatherers and hunger in our own community. They were able to donate over 200 lbs. of food, much of which came from Gretchen's House families! So, Thank you! Thank you!

—Kids Care Club



Closing Due to Inclement Weather

Gretchen’s House may close when the Ann Arbor Public Schools close for inclement weather. Please call our **snow line** (480-8592) for information. **We will also have closings posted on our website, which we hope is convenient for families: www.gretchenshouse.com.**

If the Ann Arbor Public Schools close due to weather, Gretchen’s House* will have a **delayed opening** at 10:00 AM. If conditions

do not improve, we will make a decision about whether to close for the day **by 9:00 AM**. Call the snow line for information at that point. Many of our teachers live outside the immediate Ann Arbor area, and treacherous driving conditions put them and your family in danger. Although it is our desire to stay open, safety must remain our first priority.

Staff members may not care for children during days when the center closes for weather conditions. We suggest parents trade care with other families on snow days if your work does not permit you to stay home.

**Gretchen’s House IV at W.I.S.D. will close for the day any time the Ann Arbor schools are closed due to weather.*



CPR/ First Aid

Parents are welcome to sign up for CPR and First Aid training through Gretchen’s House. We schedule regular trainings each month for our staff. Cost to parents is \$20 for First Aid, \$14 for CPR, or \$30 for both. Classes are held at GH-Oak Valley, and they start at 6:15 p.m. Please contact Heike at hampel@gretchenshouse.com or 734.327.6126.

Upcoming Classes at Oak Valley:

December 14
CPR/First Aid Initial

December 15
CPR Renewal

January 11
CPR/First Aid Initial

January 13
CPR Renewal

February 7
CPR/First Aid Initial

February 8
CPR Renewal

A Gretchen’s House Graduate in the News

Atulya Shetty, a 14 year old freshman at Huron High School, attended Gretchen’s House preschool and the after school program at our Traver and Dhu Varren centers. At age 4, a Gretchen’s House teacher taught him how to play chess – the teacher was an avid player and brought his interest to the classroom. Atulya caught on quick and before you know it, he was joining chess clubs and winning!

Currently, Atulya is Michigan’s youngest chess master. Recently, he returned to Gretchen’s House to host a fundraiser to raise money for a trip to Greece for the World Youth Chess Championship. After multiple fundraising efforts, Atulya was able to go to Greece where he played 20 - 30 people simultaneously at the tournament. Atulya placed in about the middle of the pack. Not too shabby for a 14 year old playing other players considered the best in the world! We are all very proud of him.



We recently had contact with Eric Robinson (shown above with his son Alex), who provided a reference for one of our new staff. Eric currently teaches 1st grade in Dexter, where this teacher did her student teaching. In his early years, Eric attended Gretchen’s House, and returned as a summer camp counselor a few years ago – Oak Valley families may remember him. It was nice to hear from him again and see the GH family come full circle!



...because learning should be fun!

Staff News

Polly Emch and **Megan Buchanan** attended a training series on Dual Language Learners.

A special thank you to **Maggie Zhou** who provided a workshop for the GH-Dhu Varren staff on the Chinese Culture. We really appreciated the wealth of information and her time spent sharing with our teachers.

Harmony Smargon attended a workshop at Ellie's Place. She learned a lot about this wonderful resource that we have in Washtenaw County for families and children experiencing a loss.



The Gretchen's House team for the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk, 22 members strong and chaired by Oak Valley teacher Kimberly Jezowski, collected \$2,830—surpassing their goal. The walk itself had 4,000 participants and raised \$336,000 to fight breast cancer. Thank you for those who were able to donate for this worthy cause.