

Good News Gazette

February-March 2010

Oh, Happy Day!

Oh, Happy Day! Little did I know 27 years ago that I would be using a 'blog' to tell everyone about my new granddaughter. If someone had explained I could post a note on a computer and people around the world could read it instantly — well, I would have just laughed. As for the grandma thing — I admit to a little twinge of hope when, several years ago, one of the children at a center asked me, "Whose Grandma are you?" They used to ask "Whose Mommy are you?"! My first grandchild Isabella Johanna is beautiful and what a privilege it is to hold her in my arms this weekend. The rewards of parenting are so many, but this is near the top for joy. I know many of my readers are young parents still coping with the trials of diapers and tantrums and school lunches, but I wanted to let you know about this beautiful light at the end of what sometimes feels like a tunnel. When you ask yourself on a bad day, "What was I thinking?" stay the course, it really is the best decision you ever made.

from Gretchen's Blog

Even before this newsletter went to press, another grandchild was added to the GH family! Welcome to Jack Conor Patterson, who was born on Sunday, Feb. 7! Jack's proud grandma is Karin Nowak, Director of our Oak Valley center. Congratulations to Karin's daughter and son-in-law, Stephanie and Zach.

When I started working at Gretchen's House, the Directors were having babies — at one point we even hired a "Director at



large" to rotate between the centers to cover absences. Now our children are getting married and having babies of their own. It has been wonderful to work with the same group of people long enough to see this process evolve. I believe this helps our organization see the bigger picture when making policies or dealing with "issues of the day." I know I appreciate the experience and wisdom that my coworkers bring to their work each day.

Congratulations to our new Grandmas, and welcome to the world, Isabella and Jack!

— Heidi McFadden

"When a child is born, so are grandmothers." ~ Judith Levy



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How To Reach Us

Weather Hotline:
734.480.8592

700 Mt. Vernon
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
734.769.4402
deb.oswalt@gretchenshouse.com

721 Mt. Pleasant
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
734.662.2739
julie.morrison@gretchenshouse.com

1745 W. Stadium Blvd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
734.663.4720
nan.mastie@gretchenshouse.com

1735 Wagner Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
734.994.8111 ext. 1696
christine.snyder@gretchenshouse.com

2625 Traver Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
734.761.7030
lea.augustine@gretchenshouse.com

2340 Oak Valley Dr.
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
734.327.6125
karin.nowak@gretchenshouse.com

1580 Dhu Varren
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
734.821.2800
laura.griswold@gretchenshouse.com

Human Resources Director
Michele Davis
734.761.2576
michele.davis@gretchenshouse.com

Executive Director
Heidi McFadden:
734.761.2576
heidi.mcfadden@gretchenshouse.com

President and Owner
Gretchen Preston:
734.761.2576
gretchen.preston@gretchenshouse.com

Important Notes

Summer Camp

Our planning for this year's Scamp program has already begun. Three of our centers offer a full day program for children ages 5-11: Oak Valley, Traver, and Dhu Varren. Mt. Vernon will have a program for 5-7 year olds.

Scampers enjoy crafts, sports, swimming at public pools, weekly local field trips and several special trips to the Toledo Zoo, Greenfield Village, and other popular destinations.

Registration forms will be available at the end of February. Please see your center Director if you have questions about our summer programs.

Ann Arbor Public School Closings

2/15	Closed
2/22-26	Mid-Winter Break
3/8	No School for Elementary Students
4/2-9	Spring Break (Note: no school on Friday, 4/2; school resumes 4/12)

Reminder: AM Preschool is not in session on days the Ann Arbor Public Schools are closed.

If you need care for your kindergarten or school age child on days the schools are closed, please sign up in your child's classroom or speak with your center Director.

Insurance Updates

If your family's insurance information changed in January, please notify your center director. We can make the changes on the emergency card if you email or call us with your new information. This is a good time to double check those contact numbers as well!

Closing Due to Inclement Weather

Gretchen's House's in Ann Arbor 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 a.m. If conditions do not improve, we will make a decision about whether to close for the day **by 9 a.m.** 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 centers close 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.*



Neighborhood News

A special thank you to all of the families who participated in our the **GH-Dhu Varren** Book Fair and Community Outreach Projects. Based on sales we received \$500 worth of books for our classrooms. Our food drive provided 236 lbs of food for Food Gatherers. We were also successful in providing hats, gloves, books and games for 20 children in the Education Project for Homeless Youth. Thank you for helping us to support our local community.

The **GH-Mt Pleasant** infant room thanks Christiane Wobus for coming in to share her family's German holiday traditions. The children were able to explore a large, wooden nutcracker. They felt the fuzz of his beard and opened and closed his mouth using the lever in his back. Christiane read to the children in German and sang them a song as well.

The Senior Choir from Brookdale Senior Living Center entertained **GH-Mt Vernon** children and staff by performing well-known holiday songs.

GH-Traver's Preschool was recently alive with instruments! We had a visit from Miles's dad, Evan, who came in one afternoon and played the saxophone for us. The children sat in awe. He played while we sang some of our favorite holiday songs. Each child got a turn to push the buttons on the instrument.

The **GH-Mt Pleasant** family holiday gathering was a great success! Parents visited with the teachers and other families while enjoying songs and creative activities in the classrooms. A special thank you to Jennifer Goltz-Taylor for bringing in her guitar and singing with the families!

GH-Mt Vernon children learned about cultural traditions from various visitors to our center during December. We heard stories, listened and danced to music from instruments and songs, participated in arts and craft projects as well as learned new words in languages different than our own.

GH-Traver's Preschool also had a visit from Jake (Teacher Becca's significant other). He brought in a drum set and played for us in the barn. We discussed loud and soft and fast and slow using the drums. The children played the bells and sang while Jake played Jingle Bells. Each child got to sit on the stool and play the drums.



Upcoming Events

There will be a Young 5s Open House **GH-Dhu Varren** on March 11.

Lake Preschool and Garden Preschool at **GH-Oak Valley** are having "Mystery Readers" come in to their classrooms. Parents, other family members and staff are encouraged to come to the classroom and read a favorite story.

The **GH-WISD** preschool classroom will have a pediatric dentist visit in March for the children to learn about healthy eating habits and caring for their teeth.



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

	Years
Laila Kujala	17
Lisa Lemble	13
Susan Petit	12
Gena Keith	8
Allison Rogers	6
Carol Rife	5
Jessica Irish	4
Peggy Prater	4
Eva-Marie Hatfield	3
Hala Hilmi	3
Lisa Kozlowski	3
Andrea Mourad	3
Kevin Do	2
Katherine Grossnickle	2
Laura Meyer	2
Huimin Ponchart	2
Jenna Stilp	2
Diane Davidson	1
Polly Emch	1
Amber Feuerstein	1
Tammara Hale	1
Meredith Hanschu	1
Samantha Struppa	1



Science at Gretchen's House



I can pour the colored water by myself, and I'm experimenting with the colors—will it be the same every time? Filling and emptying helps me learn about volume, cause and effect! (GH-Mt Pleasant)



Our teacher showed us a nebula plasma ball. She learned that name by looking it up on the computer – she's showing us how to do research! When we touched the ball, the pink electricity would move to our fingers, just like the magnets made our toys move. Sometimes electricity makes our hair stand up when we pull off our hats! (GH-Stadium)



When I get my hands into the "ooey gooey," I use new words to describe how it feels! My vocabulary is growing while I experiment with different textures and spatial relationships. (GH-Dhu Varren)



We're using our muscles to hold the knives and cut food into pieces – this will help us hold a pencil and use scissors better. We noticed that one apple can be cut into lots of little pieces, but it's still an apple. When we talk about fractions and the properties of matter when we're older, this will help us understand math and science! (GH-Oak Valley)



My teacher and I are measuring and comparing. I'm learning how to make estimates and how to classify groups! (GH-Dhu Varren)



When I mix colors with my friends, we talk about what we see and learn new words. I like solving problems together and guessing what will happen next! (GH-Oak Valley)



We had a big project with ice cubes! First we used pipettes to put water and food coloring in the trays. Then we put the trays in the freezer. Once they were frozen, we used the ice cubes to paint a mural! We learned that water can change forms when it's really cold, and then change back again when it warms up. We used a lot of descriptive words to tell our friends what was happening, and we made some predictions, too! (GH-Traver)



Mixing snow and filling containers takes a lot of patience! I am learning to solve problems and make predictions about space and volume. (GH-Oak Valley)



When I have a variety of open-ended materials, I am able to make my own discoveries. Using ice, water, and plastic tubes I learned how the soapy water can change into bubbles when I blow through the straw. I also learned that the bubbles can be different sizes depending how hard or softly I blow. When we added ice cubes to the water, we saw the ice crack as it began to melt. (GH-WISD)



I had fun experimenting with the magnets with my friends. We sorted our objects into two groups, whether they would stick to the magnet or not stick. Sometimes the magnet was so strong, it pulled the toy across the table! It was fun to guess which things would be pulled, and we learned some new words, too! (GH-Stadium)



We like to watch our little fish swim around! Our teachers talk to us about the colors, and how the fish moves. We watch how the fish gills move in and out, and we take big breaths, too. We're learning how to help take care of other living things! (GH-Mt Pleasant)



When I play with the two pop bottles and swirl it around I am learning about tornados. I am also learning cause and effect while I watch the water drain from one bottle to the other. Then I have to flip it over and watch it drain into the other bottle. I can also predict how long it will take for all of the water to drain. (GH-Little Oaks)



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, \$20 for CPR, or \$30 for both. Classes are held at GH-Oak Valley, and they start at 6:00 PM. Please contact Heike at Oak Valley to register: hhampel@gretchenshouse.com or 734.327.6126.

Upcoming Classes at Oak Valley:

February 19

CPR/First Aid Initial

February 22

CPR Renewal

March 11

CPR/First Aid Initial

March 18

CPR Renewal

How to Handle Fine Whines

Who doesn't feel like whining once in a while? It's not just kids who do it. Adults indulge too. We all know that complaints like "Why does it only rain on the weekends?" or "Where's the remote?" are much more satisfying when delivered nasally. So why does it drive us wild when our kids do the same thing?

Maybe its because whines sound so much like veiled accusations. If your son delivers, "Mommy, can I have a drink?" in a cheerful tone, it comes across as a reasonable request. But if its said in a long, drawn-out pleading whine, it can make you feel like he thinks you wouldn't give a poor, parched kid a sip of water in the middle of a hot desert.

But it doesn't have to be this way. Children can be helped to state their needs in a straightforward, non-whiney way. In the process they might even begin to recognize and talk about what's really on their minds, something they'll find useful throughout life.

Here are some suggestions to consider:

1. Give your child basic information about what whining is. Surprisingly, most young children don't have a clue, even though they do it. Don't try to explain when his whining is grating on your nerves; wait until a time when you're both in a happier mood. Do it without accusations. You might pretend to have a teddy bear talk in a "whiney voice" and in a regular tone. Or, play a game of asking questions with different types of voices.

Before kids can stop whining, they need to know what it is.

2. Whenever your child whines, remind him briefly that you'll answer when he uses his regular voice. (Of course, you'll have to use your regular voice to remind him.)

Then look deeply interested in whatever you're doing, packing lunches or folding laundry while you wait. The minutes spent ignoring whining always seem much longer than ordinary minutes, so use the time to think ahead. Figure out possible causes of his whining. Is he tired and doesn't realize it? Has it been too long since his last meal? Is he disappointed that you had to stop playing and do something else? Is he worried about something?

Ignoring whining gives you a chance to think about what's really causing it.

3. Once your child talks to you in a non-whiney voice, take time to answer. If he's asking for something that just isn't possible, be sure to sympathize about how hard it is to want something that you just can't have. Sometimes just feeling understood helps. ("It is hard to wait for a cookie until after dinner.")

A child's effort to overcome whining is strengthened every time that effort is met with a loving response.

4. Sometimes you can help your child understand why he felt whiney in the first place. For example, you might have a hunch he was angry at you and that he wasn't sure if it was okay to come right out and say so. You don't need to go into long explanations. A simple, "You were really angry at me for turning the television off!" helps him label his feelings. It also lets him know that you won't fall apart if he puts those feelings into words.

Eliminating whining doesn't mean ignoring the feelings behind it.

Remember when your child was a baby and you had to take something away from him because it might hurt him? It was easier to do if you replaced it with a toy he could have.

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Staff News

On January 18, all GH staff attended a training called "Planning for Adult Support in the Early Childhood Classroom."

Teachers at GH-Oak Valley attended a Staff Training on January 14. The topic was "Why Movement Matters: An Introduction to Brain Gym" presented by Katy Held. Brain Gym is a system of simple movements that relieve stress naturally and enhance brain function. Brain Gym integrates the left and right hemispheric functions of the brain. Teachers learned movements that they can use themselves, or with their classroom. The movements are simple and fun to do.

In February, **Christine Snyder** is presenting a two-day workshop in Harrisburg, PA on Infant/Toddler Curriculum using the High/Scope Approach.

The GH-WISD preschool classroom welcomes student teacher, **Alicia Sarkar** to their program. Alicia is attending Madonna

University and will be working with the preschool team January-March.

In February, **Christine Snyder** and **Heidi McFadden** are giving a presentation to the Jackson area Director's group on developing relationships within the community.



Fine Whines

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It's the same way with whining. Don't just take it away; give him something to replace it with: the ability to recognize what whining is, a warm response to non-whiney requests, and practice in understanding and expressing his feelings.

This article reprinted from The Well-Centered Child newsletter.



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.

Play Ideas for Infants & Toddlers

Looking Toy

Fill a clear, plastic jar with water and add a small, brightly-colored object. Screw the lid on tightly and turn it upside down so your baby can watch the object drift down through the water.

Textures

Loosely wrap your toddler's toys in various fabrics. Your child will enjoy the exploring a range of textures as she unwraps them. You could use a pillow slip, washcloth, paper bag, or scarf. Your

child may want to explore some of wrapping by chewing on them, so make sure they're all clean and safe.

Push & Pull Toys

Babies are thrilled to discover they can move big objects. Turn a small chair on its back and let your toddler push it around the room. Tie a short string to your laundry basket and let your toddler pull it.

This article reprinted with permission from The Well-Centered Child newsletter.



...because learning should be fun!



While playing in the snow I explore many new materials using my senses. I experience the light fluffy texture and very cool temperature of the snow while enjoying the opportunity to sled and build using the new fallen snow.

