

Good News Gazette

February-March 2011

Enough With That Subject!

An exciting thing happened to me this month – I got contacts! No more feeling around my desk for the lump under a stack of papers, or walking around the office, asking people if they'd seen my reading glasses.

But wait a minute—it's not that easy to put them in, and I can't see as well as I'd expected. In fact, I feel like a car with whacky headlights! And the worst part is that people are tired of hearing me talk about it. They don't just smile politely anymore. Now they're actually saying "Are you done talking about that? Enough about the contacts!"

As I was thinking about this column, I realized that this experience was giving me some new parenting insights (pardon the obvious symbolism and use of puns!). As a mom, parenting hasn't always been what I expected. I have often been "done" with a topic long before my child was ready to give it a rest. How many times have I told her that "we'll talk about that tomorrow," but tomorrow is busy too, and we never finish the conversation.

Beth McLampy will be presenting her parenting workshops again, starting in March. The focus during these discussions will usually be empathy. When we start with empathy, whether it's with our children or

with other adults, we're able to see situations more clearly, and our communication is more meaningful.

You're really disappointed—You feel sad right now—Wow – you're jumping up and down! You're excited about that! All of us want to be validated, whether it's for our hard work, or just a little recognition that our feelings matter. It's amazing how powerful empathy is – it can transform a "horrible, no good, very bad day" into a quiet evening!

All of us want to be validated...

Mark your calendars – sessions for "new" parents (those who haven't yet attended one of Beth's sessions) will be held on Tuesdays at our Oak Valley center, on March 1st, 8th, 22nd and 29th. There will also be a series for returning parents at our Dhu Varren location, on Thursdays, March 10th, 17th, 24th and 31st. All sessions will go from 6-7:30 p.m.

For more information, speak with your center Director or check out our website at www.gretchenshouse.com. Click on the parenting series link on the blue, left-hand column.

Enjoy a new perspective, a different view, clarity of vision—you get the idea!

Heidi McFadden



In This Issue

- Closing Due to Inclement Weather 2
- CPR/First Aid 7
- Do the Same Old Toys Teach Anything New? ... 7
- Green Living 6
- Important Notes 2
- Neighborhood News 3
- Parking Lot Safety 6
- Responsibility for Small Chores 7
- Upcoming Events 6
- What Children Miss When They Sit Still 8





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

**Early LCC Early Learning
Children's Community**
601 Washington Sq. North
Lansing, MI 48933
517.483.1100

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.

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!

Ann Arbor Public School Closings

3/7 No School for Elementary Students
4/4-8 Spring Break
4/22 Closed

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.

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.*



Neighborhood News

Thank you to the parents at **GH-Mt. Pleasant** for helping us collect food in December to donate to Food Gatherers. Your donations will definitely help others in our community.

The **GH-Dhu Varren** center collected non – perishable food for Food Gatherer’s during the month of December. The during winter break several of the school agers volunteered to help pack up the food and were very excited when the scale read 231 lbs! GH-Dhu Varren also adopted the SOS child care center which serves families in crisis. The director and classroom teachers were so thankful for the many toys, clothing and other vital necessities they received and desperately needed. Thank you to everyone who contributed to these important organizations who are so vital in our community.

In February, the **GH-Stadium** center held their 2nd Annual Winter Festival.

A special thank you to Katie Lund for sharing her family’s holiday tradition of Winter Solstice with the **GH-Mt. Vernon** center.

GH-WISD invited parents to lunch in the classroom in February.

GH-Mt. Vernon welcomes their High School Helper, Clare McFadden to the center.

The Punch and Cookies Holiday Party was a huge success. **GH-Mt. Vernon** was filled with families, friends, and fun. The homemade cookies, prepared by the children (the process took about two weeks) were handed out to neighbors, and our mail carrier.

Thank you to Christiane Wobus for visiting both **GH-Mt. Vernon** and **GH-Mt. Pleasant** in December to share her family’s German Holiday Traditions. They saw many different Germany decorations and heard about how German holidays are celebrated in Germany. The children enjoyed opening and shutting the mouth of the nutcracker and watching the German Candle Carousel go around and around, being powered by the heat of candles. They were amazed at the smoke that came out of the mouth of the German Incense Smoker as well.

The **GH-Mt. Pleasant** and **GH-Mt. Vernon** centers celebrated the Chinese New Year with parents Angie Fagerlin and Ching-Yune Sylvester in February. The toddler room at GH-Mt Pleasant has added an “Events” calendar that parents can sign up on to come in and read a book or share their own interest or talent. Have questions? Just talk with the toddler teachers. We would love to have you come in and help enrich our program with your expertise!



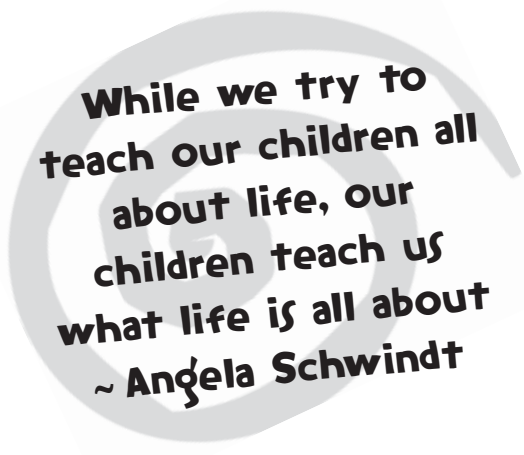
These staff members are celebrating Gretchen’s House anniversaries this February and March!

	Years
Laila Kujala	18
Lisa Lemble	14
Susan Petit	13
Allison Rogers	7
Carol Rife	6
Peggy Prater	5
Jessica Irish	5
Eva-Marie Hatfield	4
Hala Hilmi	4
Andrea Mourad	4
Kevin Do	3
Amber Feuerstein	2
Diane Davidson	2
Tammara Hale	2
Samantha Struppa	2
Marcus Ebels	2
Polly Emch	2
Priscilla White	1
Anita Mezo	1

Sentence Surprises

Take turns adding a word or two to a sentence. For example, you could start by saying “My ____.” Your child might chime in, “My cat ____.” Then you add a few more words, “My cat danced on a ____.” And so on.

When the sentence comes to a logical end, start another one, and before long you’ll have a story! *Reprinted from The Well-Centered Child, March 2006.*





Integrating Mathematics



Cooking involves a lot of counting, measuring, and predicting what will happen next! You also have to follow instructions, step by step. (GH-Mt. Vernon)



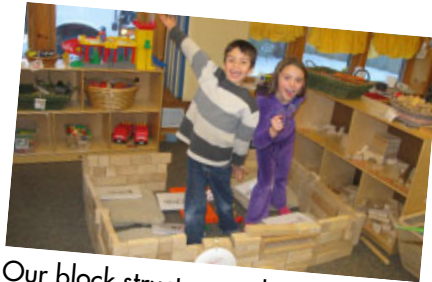
Clean up time is a great opportunity for matching and grouping objects with similar properties! (GH-Stadium)



Matching patterns, recognizing spatial relationships and understanding the concept of a part-whole relationship...a lot is happening while we work with the parquet blocks! (GH-Dhu Varren)



I can make it even taller with one...more...block...OOPS! That's ok, I can start over and see if my tower falls every time. (GH-WISD)



Our block structure took a lot of planning, making adjustments, and measuring...and we were negotiating the whole time! (GH-Traver)



Who has more? Are they the same? We're classifying and sorting – important math skills. (GH-Mt. Pleasant)



The pegs have to go in a certain order so that I can see the pattern... (GH-WISD)



I can practice putting all of the pieces together and taking them apart. Repeat! I'm experiencing numbers and concepts that will help me when I do math when I'm older! (GH-Mt. Pleasant)



I started with a pattern, but now I'm just getting it to go higher and higher. Describing what I'm doing helps me build a math vocabulary. (GH-Mt. Pleasant)



It's a long line, and it took a lot of perseverance to get it straight. I may change how it's arranged, but it will still be the same, just different. Classifying objects is an important math skill. (GH-WISD)



Counting the cars and making the train longer, then shorter...how does the length of the train change the way it moves? I might be an engineer when I grow up! (GH-Mt. Vernon)



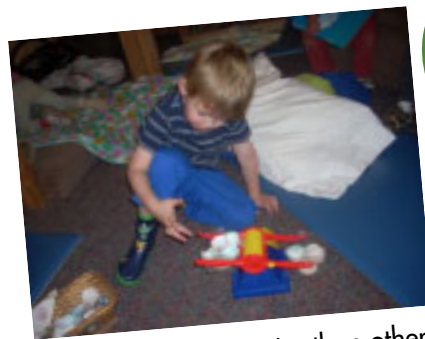
Clean up time offers many opportunities for completing a multi-step process – and it's a great esteem builder to know that you are capable of taking care of the classroom...just like the adults! (GH-Traver)



Lining up the trucks, we can see how they compare to one another. Let's group them this way...no, I think we should put the other one in front! We're classifying and making decisions together! (GH-Stadium)



Look how tall my baby is! I'm taller than she is. She is shorter than I am. I'm learning math words! (GH-Stadium)



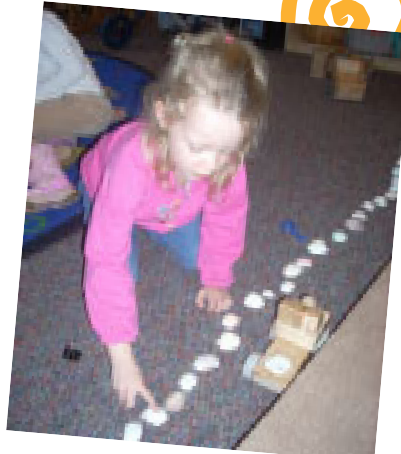
Some shells are heavier than others. Sometimes putting more on one side makes it heavier, but if the shells are bigger, it doesn't take so many...I'm learning about measuring and data analysis. (GH-Dhu Varren)



If we move the pieces around, our marble takes a different route...we can even race two marbles if we put them in at the same time. We're predicting, experimenting, and working together! (GH-Traver)



What happens if I put the smaller one on first? I'm learning about size and fitting pieces together – important math skills! (GH-Traver)



Counting, describing shapes, and comparing each piece – lots of fun with shells! Let's go to the beach and collect more! (GH-Dhu Varren)



It gets taller and taller! How can we reach the top? (GH-Mt. Vernon)



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.

Upcoming Events

During February the **GH-Stadium** preschool will accept used infant/toddler toys, books, and clothing to donate to Kiwanis.

Sign up sheets will be available on the parent information boards for parents to sign up as guest readers during the month of March at **GH-WISD**.

GH-Dhu Varren is in the process of taking the final steps toward NAEYC re-accreditation. We appreciate all of the staff

and parent participation we received as we worked through the self study process. It was very valuable to discover our strengths as an organization and areas where we can grow and improve. We are looking forward to the next step. NAEYC will send out a validator to come and observe our program in action for one to two days. We will keep you posted as we continue through this important process.

Open the Door to Learning

"It's too (choose one: cold, rainy, damp, windy, muddy) to play outside today." How often will your child hear those words this spring?

The number of days your child stays indoors may depend more on adult attitudes than on forecasts from the weather service.

But no matter how adults may feel about it, kids need to get outside. Not just when the weather is mild. Not just on sunny days. Not just when there's some extra time to fill, but every day. Most early childhood educators agree that outdoor play should be a part of every child's day.

- Children learn science by being outside. They learn that even though air is invisible, they can feel it against their faces as they run. They discover that the wind is moving air, and that it can make things move.
- Young children learn through their large muscles. Whether your children are climbing on a playground climber, scaling a tree, or simply playing games up and down the front steps, they are learning. When children climb and play actively you can almost see their bodies and minds working together. They are

taking in information about gravity, location, balance, and distance.

- Right outside your front door your child can see that the sun climbs higher in the sky as winter fades, leaves are beginning to form on bushes and trees, a puddle that's icy one day turns into water the next.
- Even after a spring shower, the natural world has much to offer. Time spent outdoors gives your child a chance to smell the fresh, damp air and explore the first-hand how raindrops transform the everyday world.
- As they collect stones, make piles of twigs, or dig in the sand, they have hands-on experiences with math concepts of quantity, size, mass, weight, and shape.
- When children are outdoors, they are free to do what comes naturally to people their age: run, shout, play hard, and test their strength and independence.

Daily opportunities for outdoor play may be the best part of your child's education, no matter what his or her age.

*Excerpt reprinted from **The Well-Centered Child**, March 2006.*



Responsibility for Small Chores

Children will enjoy helping with small chores in the house if you tailor these to their development, skills, and interest. Arrange it so your child can perform the task successfully, otherwise he may get discouraged and give up. Here are just a few small chores to try with your child.

1. **Putting away toys.** Give your child some plain boxes. Explain that one is for blocks, one for dolls, another for cars, and so on. He can draw pictures on the outside of the boxes and you can label them. When pickup time comes, let him put away his toys by sorting them. Your child will work more enthusiastically if you help her.
2. **Empty wastebaskets.** The basket shouldn't be heavy or too large for the child to handle. Give him clear directions where the trash is to go.

3. **Wash and dry dishes.** She can wash her own plate and cup. It's best to use nonbreakable dishes.
4. **Making his own bed.** Show how to make it. Help him and don't be too critical of the way he does it. This is a hard task and the child needs encouragement and praise to continue doing this job.
5. **Choosing her own clothes and dressing herself.** Keep her clothes on low racks or in low drawers so she can easily reach them herself.
6. **Setting the table.** Do a place setting yourself and let your child follow your model. At first he'll make mistakes, but with encouragement, he'll soon be able to do it correctly.

*Excerpt reprinted from **The Well-Centered Child**, November 2007.*

Do the Same Old Toys Teach Anything New?

Whether your child is in a class for two year olds, three year olds, or four year olds, he or she is likely to have some of the same kinds of toys from year to year. Blocks, balls, play dough, and dolls appear in classrooms at all levels.

Some parents worry that such similarities mean their child won't be challenged. The truth is, children thrive on repetition, especially when it comes to the basics.

If your child is in a class for four year olds this year, take a few minutes to watch how he or she uses some of the play materials. Then recall how he used the same toys last year. You'll see that the same materials are being used in increasingly elaborate ways.

1. By using familiar toys this year children begin to refine ideas rooted in last years' play, and in doing so, gain a deeper understanding. Last years' random tower

of blocks may slowly become this years' symmetrical design of alternating colors and carefully chosen sizes.

2. Having the same toys available gives children a chance recently developed skills. Last year you might have seen your three year old catching a ball by hugging it against his chest with his arms. This year he'll begin to figure out how to catch that same ball using only his hands.
3. When children are able to repeat play experiences, they can apply new knowledge to old situations. Three year olds pound and squeeze play dough. When they are four, you'll see them begin to roll and shape it in a variety of ways.

*Excerpt reprinted from **The Well-Centered Child**, August 2007.*



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 hhampel@gretchenshouse.com or 734.327.6126.

Upcoming Classes at Oak Valley:

March 8
CPR/First Aid Initial

March 10
CPR Renewal



...because learning should be fun!

What Young Children Miss When They Sit Still



When young children
...try things again and again
...build and construct
...solve problems
...organize and see connections
...pretend
...investigate new ideas
they're thinking and understanding.



When young children
...touch and hold
...smell and taste
...poke, squish, stretch
...hear and make sound
...play with other children
...ask questions and converse about what interests them
they're gaining and consolidating knowledge.



When young children
...climb, slide, skip
...run
...balance
...throw and catch
...pour and scoop
...dance, skip, and move vigorously
they're building skills and strengthening muscles.

When young children are forced to sit still for long periods, they're losing time for
...thinking and understanding
...gaining and consolidating knowledge
...building skills and strengthening muscles
In short, they're losing time for learning.

