

Good News Gazette

July-August 2010

Adventures of an Everyday Object

Our family moved last summer, and the process was an opportunity to find long-discarded items from my daughters' early years. Some of those were packed up, many were donated, but the contents of one big box was dumped behind our garage. Rocks! Both of my daughters loved rocks. They weren't interested in Petoskey stones or beautiful fossils. They just liked rocks. Sorting them in egg cartons, filling empty milk jugs, or lining them up on the sidewalk—it was all about the rocks.

So when I read this article by Christine Snyder, Director at our WISD center, it brought back happy memories for me (they're happy now – at the time, I have to admit being annoyed by the rocks on more than one occasion!). So please indulge your imagination and read on about a day in the life of a scarf...

You're tempted to stop reading, I know, but this is no ordinary scarf. This scarf is a member of an elite group of materials at Gretchen's House. This scarf plays many important roles in the lives of very important children.

The scarf's day starts like any other, alone in a dark quiet room until—the children start arriving!

The scarf's first adventure begins as an apron, tied around a child's waist to protect the chef from the splatters of mixing up a tasty concoction in the house area. After the meal is prepared, the scarf is removed so

the child can slip into a snazzy dress to enjoy the meal that has been made.

As the scarf attempts to enjoy the aroma, it is swooped up to be draped across the shoulders of a super hero off to rescue those in need! The scarf swooshes and swishes as the super hero rushes here and there to assist his fellow citizens!

With the world no longer in peril, the scarf is free to bask in the giggles of a infant, engaged in a rousing game of peek-a-boo. The scarf tickles the baby's cheeks then flies high in the air to reveal the teacher's face. The baby's coos of excitement and glee are contagious! Another child comes over the join in the game.

Eventually the children become weary and the scarf snuggles up in the palm a sleepy toddler, ready to take a break from the adventures. The child gently caresses the silky scarf between his finger and thumb, recalling the many exciting adventures of the day.

After the children depart, the scarf turns in for the night, preparing for yet another day as a prop, a comfort item, and a valuable tool for some very important children.

Sometimes the most valuable materials we can offer children are the simplest. These "found objects" are materials that are easy to find around the house or at dollar stores or thrift stores. Items that are often taken on

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Important Notes

Junior Counselors

You may notice some new faces in the centers this summer, playing in the sand like one of the kids, but definitely too old for preschool! Please welcome our Junior Counselors! This program provides a pre-employment opportunity for middle-school youth who are looking for a fun job experience during the summer. Jr. Counselors are an extra set of hands for the teachers, and the children love having older kids to play with.

If you have a child who is too old for summer camp but needs some structured time this summer, please ask your Director about this program. It's not full day child care, but it is a great way for older kids to learn about job responsibilities in a safe, fun environment. Some Jr. Counselors have gone on to become teachers in our programs after they finished school!

Vacations and Lazy Summer Days

Please let us know your vacation plans for the summer. Whether you will be gone for just one day, or more, it helps us plan for staffing and activities.

As the pace slows down for the summer, it is also helpful if you notify the center when your child will be arriving much later than usual. Teachers don't want to leave the center on neighborhood walks if one of their children has not yet arrived, so those calls are very helpful.

Extra Clothes Reminder

Please check your child's cubby for extra clothes that are appropriate for the season. Children need a complete set of extra clothes, a bike helmet (older toddlers and preschool) and a bathing suit for sprinkler play. We also recommend "water shoes" to protect children's feet and allow them to get wet while in the sprinkler or sand box.

All GH Centers Closed

- Wednesday–Friday, September 1–3, for Staff Work Days

Scamp Reminders

Our Scamp program is off to a great start! Please note the following:

- Scamp payments are due on the first of each month. If your child will not attend in August, your balance must be paid in full by July 1.
- Scampers need a water bottle, sack lunch and bathing suit and towel at the center every day.
- If your child will not attend as scheduled, please call the center by 9:00 am, so the staff know not to expect you.

Watch the dry erase board and parent board for any schedule changes or other important information!

Vacation Credit

During this time of year, we often receive requests for a tuition credit for family vacations or extended time away from the center. Unfortunately, we cannot grant vacation credits, as our major cost – staffing – does not change when one or two children are absent.

In order to maintain continuity of care, most of our teachers work full time. This means that your child's teacher is working and getting paid the full amount, even when your child is not there. Our teachers also receive paid time off and a "cafeteria" benefit plan. So when your child's teacher is on vacation, s/he is being paid, as is their substitute.

Studies show trained teachers, teacher salaries and benefits are all critical to creating a quality program. We appreciate the sacrifice parents make to support our program in this way.



Staff News

Dolores Winn coordinated a book donation drive for the Mott Children's Hospital at the GH-Mt Pleasant center during the months of April and May. The families generously donated 52 books that will help provide support for the many patients and families at the hospital.

Stephanie Russell and **Dolores Winn** completed an online High/Scope training on the Infant/Toddler Child Observation Record. They will use their new knowledge and understanding of our assessment tool to help support the other teachers in our program.

Laura McGregor completed her Child Development Associates certification. Congratulations Laura!

GH-Mt Vernon Teacher **Andrea Beaubien** became Andrea Turner when she married her fiancé Jeff Turner on May 15. Congratulations Andrea & Jeff. The children are waiting patiently for her to bring in pictures of her wearing her "Princess wedding dress" (according to the girls).



These staff members are celebrating Gretchen's House anniversaries this July and August!

	Years
Paige Sienko	20
Heidi McFadden	18
Laura Griswold	18
Amy Higgs	12
Beth Renner	11
Rebecca Haft	11
Harmony Smargon	10
Stacey Marshall	10
Loisann Arnold	10
Christine Snyder	9
Marina Yetkin	7
Nan Mastie	7
Angela Brown	5
Megan Haight	5
Kellie Chestler-Root	5
Lori Williams	4
Jessica Humphries	4
Jessica Lapp	4
Julie Garbacz	4
Deb Oswalt	3
Jamie Halliday	3
Leanna Holman	3
Shauna Dillard	3
Caroline Penny	3
Heather Poll	3
Elizabeth McLampy	3
Timothy Stuck	3
Sandra Shankus	3
Denise Lechtanski	2
Erin Brumm	2
Becky Whittaker	2
Andrea Beaubien	2
Michelle Gordon	2
Emily Artinian	2
Alisa Cox	2
Kathleen Ehlers	2
Michelle Ladd	2
Alka Garg	1
Heidi Duex	1
Marie Gaab	1
Kate Loukus	1

Sunscreen and Insect Repellent

Gretchen's House provides both sunscreen and insect repellent. Based on advice from our consulting pediatricians, we have developed the following policies:

Sunscreen will be applied at least twice each day, prior to going outside for children six months old and older. The sunscreen we provide is waterproof, at least 30 spf, and is paba free. Children who need their own sunscreen, due to allergies, need to have a note from their doctor (or have the instructions as part of their individual allergy plan). Those parents need to provide their child's sunscreen in its original container, labeled with their child's name.

Insect Repellent is only applied sparingly to the back of legs, neck or arms, avoiding lower arms, hands and face. For children two months to two years, we use insect repellent that does not contain DEET. For children two years old and older, we use insect repellent that has less than 10% DEET.

There will always be a note posted on the sign-out sheet when insect repellent has been applied that day. Children should be

bathed at night when insect repellent has been applied. We will only apply insect repellent when mosquitoes or other insects are bothersome (typically in late summer). If you do not wish to have insect repellent applied to your child, you need to notify the staff in writing.



Upcoming Events

GH-Mt Pleasant will hold its Infant Room Potluck on Wednesday, July 14 and its Toddler Room Potluck on Tuesday, July 15, both from 5:45-7:00 pm.

GH-Traver's Summer Camp children will run their annual scholastic book fair the week of July 19. Stop by the Traver Barn to see the huge selection of books available.



Outdoor Learning Environment



We worked together to plant flowers in our new playhouse window box. We made a plan and "dug right in!" (GH-Mt Pleasant)



Our new easels make painting outside a lot easier, and more fun! (GH-Mt Pleasant)



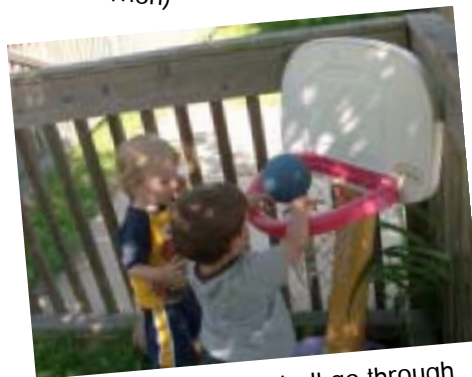
Building a car with crates involves a lot of steps, and a lot of problem-solving. (GH-Mt Vernon)



Working with friends makes the job easier. So does having the right tools, so I'll let you use this shovel. (GH-Traver)



We worked together to build a mountain and a moat, and had some great ideas about how to use them! (GH-Mt Vernon)



Score! We watch the ball go through the hoop and roll away. It's the same every time! We're learning about the laws of physics. (GH-Traver)



We started out making things float and sink. But splashing is a lot more fun! (GH-Stadium)



Climbing the chain wall exercises my muscles, and I have to think ahead about my next move. (GH-Mt Vernon)



The preschoolers helped to plant mint last summer. It grew again this year. We like tasting and exploring the mint we grew ourselves! (GH-Dhu Varren)



When my paper is on the bumpy tree, it makes my drawing look different than when I put it on the smooth table. I'm learning new words to describe my work, and it's fun to experiment! (GH-Mt Pleasant)



Throwing balls across the waves was like volleyball without the nets! (GH-Oak Valley)



There is nothing better than swinging and talking with friends. (GH-Traver)



Running up and down the lanes – we feel taller when we're up on top! (GH-Oak Valley)



We're investigating some bugs on the playground! We're learning a lot about nature and how insects move around. (GH-Dhu Varren)



All aboard! It takes a lot of planning and perseverance to get the train cars all lined up. Not to mention the negotiation skills we're practicing as we decide on our destination! (GH-Dhu Varren)



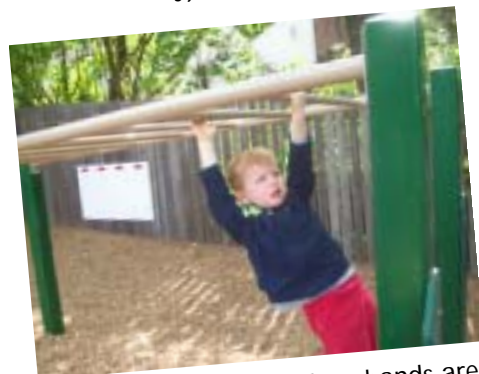
Time for a group shot (and a little rest) before we head back to the center! (GH-Oak Valley)



Laying out all of the materials helps me organize my thoughts. Planning is part of being a good problem-solver! (GH-Traver)



I see letters like the ones in books, and in my name. I'm learning that letters mean something – this sign says "STOP!" (GH-Mt Pleasant)



I'm getting stronger, and my hands are tougher, too! (GH-Mt Vernon)



Hello Gretchen's House families!

I have had the pleasure of working with GH families for the past 20 years teaching music and movement to children. Scheduled classes occur twice month and each session is 30-40 minutes in length. Each class is designed around a physical skill appropriate for the age and skill level of the group. Examples of these skills include; throwing, catching, jumping, and cooperative movement to name a few. Each session also includes cardiovascular strengthening and parachute play.

This month we are focusing on balancing and are using balancing beams, bean bags, balls, and of course their imaginations. A new feature in the parent newsletter will be fun and simple suggestions on the continuation of the development of the fitness and physical skills of your child. Thank you for the opportunity to work with your children. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or comments.

All the best, Tammy Holley
tammy_holley61@yahoo.com



Science and Your Fingerprints

Have your child look at the skin on her fingertip through a magnifying glass. Talk about the ridges, and then make a copy of the fingerprint.

- Have her put her finger on an inkpad and then press it on a piece of paper.
- Notice all the ridges and swirls.
- Look at the fingerprint under a magnifying glass. Suggest that your child compare her fingerprint with those of her friends.

Reprinted from The Well-Centered Child, May 2007.

Let Me Help You Cook!

"Mommy, Daddy, let me help you cook. I want to cook too!" Any parent hoping to fix a quick meal—and then relax, hears those words with more than a small twinge of apprehension.

That's because "Let me help you cook!" can mean fishing broken egg shell bits out of the pancake batter, measuring a second tablespoon of oil to replace the one that landed on your left shoe, and eating dinner a bit later than you'd originally planned.

Yet, "Let me help you cook!" can also mean opportunities for your child to sharpen his school skills. Here are just a few of the many different kinds of learning that may take place when your child cooks with you:

- **Math**—understanding quantity and size, identifying shapes, counting, learning about tools for measurement and how to use them, fractions, estimating capacity and amount.
- **Language**—using symbols, following directions, discovering new vocabulary words.
- **Science**—creating cause and effect relationships, observing changes (solid to liquid or vice-versa), learning where food comes from.

Cooking with your child is one way to put his school learning into practice while you enjoy some time together.

Allow twice as much time as you think you'll need. Children are soaking up a lot of learning with every step of a recipe. They're experiencing things adults already know about such as taste and texture. So if you really do need to get a meal prepared quickly, have them help another day. Save cooking with your children for a time when you can enjoy the experience together.

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



Everyday Object

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many adventures with children include cardboard tubes, boxes, canisters, old keys, rocks and sticks (for older children), flashlights, and wallets. For more ideas, visit the Scrap Box in Ann Arbor and discover a whole world of materials ready and waiting to embark on an adventure with a child. www.scrapbox.org



Neighborhood News

GH-Dhu Varren has a new security code for the summer months. Please talk with your child's teacher for the updated code. The Dhu Varren center will also require that all parents come through the main front entrance. This will help us to know who has entered the building and will help control the tracking of mud and other weather elements in to the building.

GH-Stadium has been able to closely observe construction out in front of the center. The Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers have enjoyed watching and identifying the construction trucks.

GH-Oak Valley hosted a benefit dinner for Susan Petit, one of the center's office managers on June 9. Many friends and center families attended this event, to raise funds that could offset some of the family's medical bills due to her recent stroke. Thanks to all of the staff who donated food items and their time, and to all who attended the event, sharing their good thoughts and wishes for Susan as she recovers.

The GH-Mt Pleasant center has a new playground in the backyard. The 25 year old swing set, sandbox and climber were removed and replaced with two new climbers, a swing set, sandbox, extended patio for outdoor eating, outdoor easels, a new riding track and playhouse. All new sod is surrounding the playground and the neighbors will be building a six foot wooden privacy fence along one side of the backyard. The children have enjoyed exploring their new play space and the teachers are happy to have a brighter space that makes visibility easier for watching the children. Thank you to Grounds for Play and Gretchen for making it happen!

GH-Mt Vernon's Spring Potluck was held on June 3. Families and staff enjoyed good food and conversation with friends. Our new playground equipment was a BIG hit! Thank you to Little Caesars Pizza located on Stadium for our discount and free delivery.

GH-Mt. Vernon's playground has been installed and has received a "Thumbs Up" from the children, staff, parents and neighbors. We are currently waiting for our water table that will be added to our smaller playground. Now we will be able to have cool water fun during the hot days of summer on both playgrounds.

GH-Mt Vernon had a great turn out for Spring Conferences. Before and after conferences parents were invited to watch a slide show titled "Thank you for a great year." The slideshow contained photos of Mt. Vernon children engaged in work and play.

GH-Traver's teachers and parents enjoyed an all center potluck in June, featuring pancakes flipped by the teachers and served with unlimited toppings. Thanks to all who could participate! We look forward to our fall potluck.

GH-Traver's Infant/Toddler room is enjoying taking neighborhood walks to the park and ponds.

In June GH-Traver preschool hosted a gardening party. Vegetables and flowers were planted in the Preschool garden box and barrels located around the playground. Thanks to the parents for the donations and the help! We look forward to tasting the delicious vegetables soon.

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:

July 20
CPR/First Aid Initial

July 21
CPR Renewal

August 9
CPR/First Aid Initial

August 10
CPR Renewal

September 15
CPR/First Aid Initial

September 16
CPR Renewal



...because learning should be fun!



Even though the construction on Stadium Blvd is inconvenient for parents, we love watching the real machines do their work!" *Note to parents: Equipment appears closer than it is in real life!* (GH-Stadium)