

# Good News Gazette

July-August 2018

## Might I Have a Bit of Earth

In the book *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, Mary asks her Uncle, "Might I have a bit of earth?" This simple phrase opens up a whole world of discovery for Mary as she learns about caring for plants and animals, friendship, and even herself. As spring moved into summer, the gardens at Gretchen's House began to wake up—just like Mary's secret garden. And just like Mary, our children began learning about the world around them.

Not long ago toddlers and preschoolers sat down with their teachers and discussed what types of food they would like to grow in their garden. The planning process had begun! Little cherry tomatoes are a favorite, or maybe cucumbers to make pickles. Some large zucchini can make delicious zucchini bread! We can even supply our kitchens with fresh grown produce to use for our meals. After the children have decided what to grow, it's now time to prepare the plots. With shovels in hand they work together to pull weeds and prepare the soil. Then it's time to plant, and their little eyes light up with joy! Communication is key here, as you hear older children planning together... "I'll dig the hole, and you put the plant in."

Throughout the summer children from all classrooms tend to the plants, pulling weeds, watering, and picking their bountiful harvest. They enjoy nibbling on fruits and vegetables during snacks, cooking with them, and taking them home to their families

to share. Gardening provides an enrichment experience to our children like no other. It covers all of the developmental domains found in our Child Observation Record.

### Approaches to learning:

Children take part in the planning of the garden, and work on problem solving skills as they plant and tend to the plots together. They can also reflect on how the whole process went. The rabbits ate our strawberries, what can we do differently next time?

### Social and emotional development:

Children build relationships with other children and adults as they spend quality time together taking care of the garden and preparing the food after harvesting.

### Physical development and health:

Fine and gross motor skills are used as they climb through the plots and pick weeds and small cherry tomatoes. They learn about how to eat healthy and make food for themselves.

### Language, literacy, and communication:

Throughout the process they are using verbal and nonverbal communication to talk about what they are doing. Books are also added to the classrooms to talk about gardening and different plants.

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## Important Notes

### Software Changes

Families will notice some changes with billing and classroom communication this fall. Our child assessment tool, the Child Observation Record (COR), is operated by a new software provider. The COR assessment components have not changed, but families and teachers will find it much easier to use. Improvements will allow us to share daily and weekly notes electronically. Families will also receive notifications from the center through the new program. Watch for information in the next few weeks on how you can sign up for easier access to child information and teacher news.

Another change which should benefit families is our new financial software. Families will be able to manage their payments using an app, and the new software is compatible with the COR program and our enrollment inquiry system. Even our inclement weather announcements should be able to function through this improved collaborative software. This new program, Day Care Works, will be rolled out in September.

### Junior Counselors

You may have noticed 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 have "graduated" from our program and 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.

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. Whether you will be gone for just one day, or more, it helps us plan for staffing and activities.

During our lazy summer days, 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.

### Scamp Reminders

Please note the following:

Scamp payments are due on the first of each month.

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 knows not to expect you.

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



# Neighborhood News

The children and gardens are growing this summer at **Mt. Vernon**! The children planted herbs and other plants this spring and are caring for them and harvesting the plants. The Bean Hut that teacher Linda constructed creates a fun cozy spot on the playground for children. The two new playhouses on the playgrounds are very exciting, and the children enjoy using them as elaborate stages for their dramatic play scenarios.

The **Mt. Vernon** Preschool has been busy making community connections with its field trips and visitors to the center this summer. The preschoolers visited Slow Farms to pick strawberries, which they made into yummy strawberry muffins. The Fire Department visited the center and the children got to see the truck and learn about fire safety. The Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra's Instrument Petting Zoo also visited in early July, and the children got to explore stringed instruments. In August the Mt. Vernon preschoolers will be visiting the Ann Arbor Library and getting a visit from the police department.

Scamp is underway at **Mt. Vernon** and the children are reconnecting with friends that they missed during the school year. In addition to the fun field trips and pool days, the Scampers have been busy writing and performing plays in the new play houses and on the front porch, building a "hockey rink" and playing hockey on the playground, along with everyday favorites activities like sand and water play in the sand box and fuse bead creations.

**Mt. Pleasant** infants and toddlers have been finding lots of fun ways to stay cool on these warm summer days. The children have been running through the sprinkler, splashing in the water in the outdoor sensory table, and getting wet while helping to water the flowers and vegetable gardens. Our toddlers have enjoyed their neighborhood walks this summer, which have provided many opportunities to see trucks of all kinds

working in the neighborhood.

The **Chelsea** Scamp group has enjoyed swimming, roller skating, bowling, waterparks and the watching The Flying Aces Frisbee team perform. The Preschoolers have also been on fieldtrips to Jet's pizza to make their own pizza, Timbertown and Veteran's park.

**Chelsea** families – Please mark your calendars! We will have a Summer Family Picnic on August 15<sup>th</sup>. Please watch the parent board in your child's classroom for more information as the date gets closer.

On Tuesday, August 21<sup>st</sup>, **WISD** Preschool will welcome a visit from Grace Helms Kotre from Power to Be. Grace will lead the class through a few mindfulness activities to engage our bodies and minds.

The **Traver** gardens are providing lots of fresh herbs and cucumbers for the children to harvest and enjoy!

**Traver** families are invited to join us for Popsicles on the Playground on Wednesday, July 25<sup>th</sup>. During pick up time, please stay and enjoy a popsicle with your child on their playground!

Orchard Infant at **Oak Valley** hosted families during snack as we tried foods from their cultures: Plantains (Puerto Rico), Lingonberry Jam (Germany), and Hummus (Armenia). In June, several classrooms at Oak Valley hosted "Fruit with Families."

**Oak Valley** classrooms have been enjoying walking trips to the duck pond and gardens at our neighboring Arbor Hospice. Preschool classrooms have enjoyed visiting County Farm Park, Gallup Park and the Arb for local field trips.

**Oak Valley** was awarded a Quality Improvement Grant from the Michigan Early



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

	<b>Years</b>
Paige Sienko	28
Heidi McFadden	26
Laura Griswold	26
Jinell Warson	24
Beth Renner	23
Harmony Smargon	18
Stacey Marshall	18
Sara Guoan	15
Misty Wesney	15
Megan Haight	13
Lori Williams	12
Julie Kotzen	12
Elizabeth Melampy	11
Timothy Stuck	11
Denise Lechtanski	10
Andrea Turner	10
Marie Gaab	9
Stephanie Lingo	8
Heather Riley	7
Shannon Steinbach	6
Michelle Ashley	6
Corey Bondy	6
Chelsea Hendrickson	5
Courtney Hendrickson	5
Tyan Brown	5
Kelly Hayes	5
Alison Robbins	5
Kimberly Tiemann	4
Hailey Steffen	4
Joy Newton	4
Alyssa Hammer	4

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## The Outdoor Classroom



We have tires on our playground to fulfill our need for heavy work and gives us an open-ended material to use.



Flowing water is always relaxing. From the sound to the touch.



Heavy work is pulling my friends in a wagon!



Large motor activities are all around us, but especially when we are outside.



A popular choice at GH is building with crates while outside. We use our imaginations and come up with some awesome structures.



We always have a comfortable place where reading books is available while we are outside.



One way we support infants' and toddlers' sensory-motor learning is to provide a variety of textures in the environment for tactile exploration. Being outside with nature is one way we accomplish this.





Are you ready for some mud? Our mud kitchens give us the chance to measure, pour, dump and use our imaginations.



We can do any part of our day outside. This picture shows greeting time and going over messages on our message board.



The children help plant, care for and harvest plants and flowers on the playgrounds and other areas around the centers. We offer many opportunities for the children to take ownership of their space.



Adult attitudes toward the natural environment have a profound effect on how children view and experience it. It is important to share their sense of wonder.



Water and sand makes for a lot of talking, problem-solving and being successful at filling, dumping, floating and sinking. I'm sure there were also yummy muffins and soup made as well.





# Sunscreen and Insect Repellent



## Anniversaries Continued

	<b>Years</b>
Jeremy Tyler	3
Sarah Brinker	3
Amanda Stolpe	3
Chelsea Miller	2
Nicole DeBellefeuille	2
Lyric Morgan	2
Erica Biancalana	2
Lindsey Hayes	2
Kaitlin Birondo	2
Kathryn Hainsworth	2
Jessica Cook	2
Hanna Schwank	2
Carol Williams	2
Catia Medoro	2
Ana Vieta	2
Florence Alexander	1
Emily Tufnell	1
Giovanni Griswold	1
Jennifer Pochettino	1
Demetra Barnett	1
Linda Mammel	1
Courtney Race	1
Shannon Sailus	1
Pamela Thompson	1
Huseyin Ciftci	1
LuAnn Hazelitt	1
Lily Cortes Klemans	1

Gretchen's House provides both sunscreen and insect repellent. Based on advice from our consulting pediatrician, 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 will have a rating of 3 or better by the Environmental Working Group. ***A label with the sunscreen ingredients and rating will be posted in all of our centers.***

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.

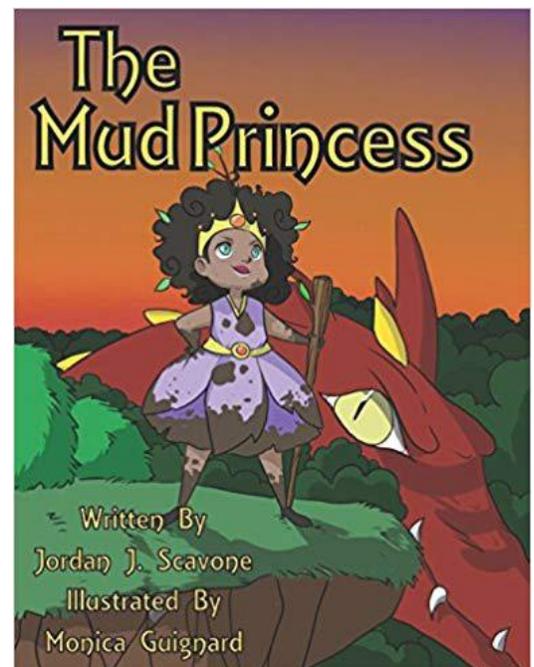
**Insect Repellent** is only applied sparingly to the back of legs, neck or arms, avoiding lower arms, hands and face. For children two months to two years, we use insect repellent that does not contain DEET. For children two years old and older, we use insect repellent that has less than 10% DEET.

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.



## Staff News

Congratulations to **Jordan Scavone**, Stadium teacher, who has published his second children's book, *The Mud Princess*, available on Amazon.





# A Bit of Earth

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## Mathematics:

Children create charts and graphs showing what their favorite items are in the garden. They bring out rulers and work on measuring the height of their corn, or the distance between plants when planting.

## Creative arts:

Inspired by what they are growing children make drawings and paintings of the plants and flowers they see in their gardens.

## Science and technology:

This is where gardening really shines! Children are observing and classifying, understanding the balance of nature and what plants need to survive, and they are using real tools during the whole process!

## Social Studies:

They understand how change effects objects over time, and how they are part of a bigger community.

Gardening is a great summertime activity that can be done anywhere you can find a bit of earth. While we may have garden plots at our locations, plants can be grown in any container. You can start with a seedling or an already established plant. Sometimes in the classrooms we begin by putting a lima bean in a zip lock bag with a paper towel. This allows the children to really see what is going on under all that soil. If you are interested to hear more about the garden at your child's center, ask one of their teachers, and we will be happy to share with you the process.

*~Jade Teachey, Oak Valley  
Lead Teacher*



## CPR and First Aid

Sessions begin with CPR renewal, so those who do not need First Aid will be free to leave following the first half of the session. Trainings are held at our Oak Valley center. Sign up with Heike at 734-327-6126 or email her at [heike.hampel@gretchenshouse.com](mailto:heike.hampel@gretchenshouse.com).  
Upcoming dates:

September 11

October 10

# Neighborhood News

*continued from page 3*

Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC). With the funds, the center has purchased mud kitchens, mud tables, an indoor Infant/Toddler climber and science materials.

**Oak Valley** infants and toddlers are enjoying their new playground addition. A climber/slide has been added to the play space and the children are really having fun exploring it [pictures at right].



## All GH Centers Closed

Wednesday-Friday,  
August 29<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> for  
Staff Work Days

Monday, September  
3<sup>rd</sup> for Labor Day



*...because learning should be fun!*

## **Farewell Tammy**

At the end of July, we said good-bye to Tammy A'Donna, who has provided large motor and movement activities at our centers for over 25 years. Tammy has been a friend, colleague, and resource for our staff, and she will be missed by children and teachers alike. Tammy is moving out of the area, and we wish her the best of luck – keep in touch!

