

Good News Gazette

January-February 2019

Taking it Outside

When my children were younger, I had a running list of ways we all benefited from having them enrolled at Gretchen's House. During January and February, daily time outside was at the top of that list. It's easy to let the cold or the inconvenience keep us inside, but our teachers and children get outside every day, unless the wind chill is below 0.

There are many health benefits to getting outside in the winter. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) confirms that getting outside strengthens the immune system, helps form resistance to allergies, and gets us away from the indoor germs and bacteria. Outdoor play in the winter is different than in summer – walking through snow or rolling a giant snowball works your muscles, and gets fresh air in our lungs.

Cognitively, our brains have a whole new set of problems to solve, and language development is stronger when children actually experience the outdoors during winter, instead of just seeing it through a window.

According to the National Institute of Health's Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS), Vitamin D promotes calcium absorption, prevents rickets in children and prevents bones from becoming too thin or brittle. Sun exposure is an important source of vitamin D, especially for children, since very few foods contain it naturally, according to ODS.

Maybe the best reason, though, is the fun! Here are a few ideas to make outside time so engaging, you'll be missing the snow next summer...

- Build a snowman, but not the typical generic snowman. Build a snowman upside down, so it's standing on its head, build one lying on its side or build an animal, insect or person instead of a snowman. Get creative!
- Create ice sculptures from colored ice cubes.
- Bring out the sand toys and make a sandcastle with snow.
- Throw snowballs at a target painted in the snow with colored water, or use a laundry basket or hula hoop as the goal.

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Important Notes

No Public School Days

The Chelsea and Ann Arbor Public Schools will be closed 2/15-2/18. Gretchen's House will offer full day childcare for the school-age children.

Woombies for sale

Gretchen's House is a distributor of the Woombie sleep sack for infants. This allows us to purchase Woombies at a discount. We are happy to share our price with you. Please speak to your center director for more information. For more info on Woombies, check out their website at www.thewoombie.com.

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.

2019 Contracts

All currently enrolled families should have received a new child care contract for 2019 in November. These contracts reflect rates and days the centers will be closed for January-December, 2019. Contracts for 2019 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 21st. Payments are due when centers reopen on January 2, 2019. Late fees will be assessed for payments made after January 10th.

Concentration



Remember this old favorite? Spread playing cards out in rows, face down. One player turns a card face up and tries to match it with another card of the same number and color. If he makes a match, he gets to keep the pair. If the cards don't match, he turns them face down again.

If it's too difficult to play with the cards face down, find the matches by starting with them all face up.

Keep the game simple at first by using only aces through fives.



Neighborhood News

WISD Thanks all who contributed to our Sponsor-A-Family collection this year. We were able to give this special family some of the wonderful items they needed and wished for.

The holiday parties for each wing at **Dhu Varren** were a huge success and well attended by our families! We would like to thank the families for their extremely generous contributions to staff.

The Scholastic Book Fair was a huge success, garnering over 878.00 in free books for our **Dhu Varren** classrooms. We would like to thank the families for purchasing "wish list" books for each classroom! It is much appreciated.

Chelsea would like to thank the families that were able to come to celebrate the Holidays with their children at the cookie decorating in December.

Chelsea staff sends thanks to our families for their generous donations for the staff. We all appreciated the goodies and gifts. students enjoyed making playdough to share with the preschool children.

Thank you to the Chelsea Lions Club for providing the Vision Screening for the **Chelsea** Preschool students.

The teachers at **Mt. Vernon** would like to thank the families for their generous gifts during the holiday season. Also, for those who were able to attend our winter party! It was great to come to together with everyone in celebration! A Big Thank you from all of us to grandma Rosalie for leading us in music during the party and every Tuesday!

Traver school age children enjoyed a fun winter break with field trips and a pajama day! Thank you to the Huron Valley Humane

Society for hosting a field trip for our preschoolers. Traver was very grateful to make a generous donation of new toys to C.S. Mott Children's Hospital. Thank you to our families for your contribution to the toy drive!

Our annual family Winter Celebration was a huge success! Thank you to the families who joined us for an afternoon of cookies, winter fun and Magic Joe!

Beginning in January, **Oak Valley** will have two young adult student volunteers from the county-wide Liberty Young Adult program. This program supports young adult students from the ages of 20 to 26, who have special needs. The program goal is for participants to develop adult independence, support students in community work and learn travel skills (using public transportation). Kali and JoJo will be coming in with their supervising teacher to read books and make art with our preschool students. We are fortunate to be able to support this program and for our children to get to know Kali and JoJo.



These staff members are celebrating Gretchen's House anniversaries this January & February!

| | Years |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Heike Hampel | 22 |
| Kathleen Lovernick | 21 |
| Christiana McKiddie | 15 |
| Allison Rogers | 15 |
| Crystal Park | 11 |
| Arzu Aksu | 7 |
| Deborah Bossenberger | 7 |
| Linda Alvira | 6 |
| Tabatha Tyler | 6 |
| Jordan Scavone | 5 |
| Paula Steffen | 5 |
| Quinton Makgale | 5 |
| Katy Czarnecki | 4 |
| Nicole Glenn | 3 |
| Rachel Kriebel | 2 |
| Bridget Stanecki | 2 |
| Joseph Enos | 2 |
| Kaitlyn Davis | 2 |
| Ruth Brinkert | 2 |
| Ashley Lisi | 2 |
| Erica Schrodt | 2 |
| Raquel Lopez | 1 |
| Sydney Hines | 1 |
| Bulkees Nazrin | |
| Banu Abdullah | 1 |
| Carson Cekola | 1 |
| Ashley Hoover | 1 |

How Many...?



Here are some questions to help your child practice counting:

- How many noses are there in this room?
- How many mouths? Eyes? Toes?

Don't forget to count teddy bears' and pets' noses and toes too!



Bulletin Board



Teamwork!
We can do
it together!



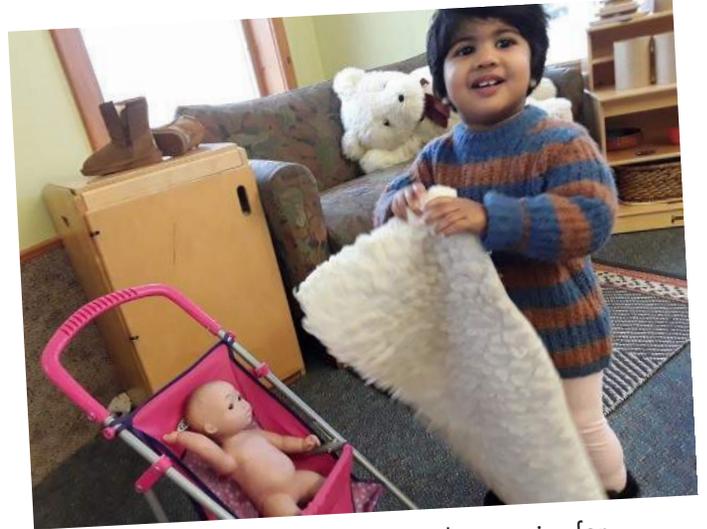
Who sets the table, makes and serves the meals at your house? At GH I can practice my skills with others in our House Area.



Let's go for a drive! These steering wheels are real, heavy and fun!



You will see materials that replicate real-life in our spaces. Community Helpers are some of our play people that we have.



At Gretchen's House children become aware of social norms, customs, personal responsibility and strategies for interacting with others by the experiences and materials we provide.



There are a lot of negotiating and problem-solving that happens during group projects.



I can help fold the laundry! Older Toddlers at Stadium jump in to help their teacher fold towels.



I'll Drive! Being side-by-side with a friend will help me learn how to interact and socialize.



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.

Note: *most of our parking lots are one-way, for safety and efficiency during times of peak use. Please follow the signs and do not try to take a short cut.*

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.



**“Children
are not
things to
be molded
but people
to be
unfolded.”
Jess Lair**

Culinary Camouflage

Having trouble getting your child to eat their veggies? Here are some practical and delicious suggestions for adding vegetables to your child's favorite meals:

When it comes to getting kids to eat something new or healthy, presentation is everything. One way to increase your child's veggie intake is to add them to foods your child already loves. Shredded carrots, zucchini, onions and peppers mix nicely in ground meat dishes — from meatloaf and meatballs to burgers and ground beef casseroles. Carrots and zucchini take on the flavors of the foods they are in, and onions and peppers add savory flavors to make the meal even better.

When you are making a favorite dinner, think about what vegetables are similar in taste and texture to the foods you are making. Cauliflower can easily be mashed in with creamy potatoes. Try a combo of two-thirds spuds to one-third florets. Mash some cooked butternut squash or carrots to enhance the sauce in your family's favorite mac and cheese. Puree carrots, cucumbers and cabbage and stir the mixture

into spaghetti or pizza sauce. Cook some spaghetti squash and mix the stringy strands with pasta. Once topped with sauce and sprinkled with cheese, your child will love the veggies and never suspect how healthy their meal is.

Layers of squash atop the pasta will be a great addition to your regular lasagna. Even a picky eater won't mind thin slices of veggies just under the bubbling cheese of a homemade pizza. Slide mushroom bits into a chicken and cheese quesadilla and watch them dig in. When you think you have just tried everything and are still hitting the wall with your toddler's palate, just remember, Fat is flavor! Fats can help hide any bitterness that comes along with vitamin packed greens! Small amounts of cheese and bacon can be very helpful. Don't worry about small amounts of fat in your child's diet; a healthy amount of fat is good for brain development. Also it's not always about the quantity of vegetables. Sometimes the littlest bit has to be enough. Some is always better than none!

by Dani King



Unexpected Center Closings

Gretchen's House centers may close when the public schools close for inclement weather, or when mechanical issues arise that prevent us from providing a safe environment (such as no power, heat, or electricity). We have several ways to notify parents and staff in these situations.

OneCallNow. We now subscribe to this service which allows us to send emails and/or phone messages to any family members who have signed up. At least one phone number and email address for your family is automatically included, and you may add as many additional phones or emails as you like. You may also change those numbers and emails whenever you would like to, and may also opt in to receive text messages. *Please talk to the center Director if you are not sure that you are signed up for OneCallNow.*

Our snow line (734-480-8592) will also continue to be updated with the same information, and we will also use **Facebook** to share our closing status.

In general, if the Ann Arbor Public Schools close due to weather (or Chelsea, for our programs there), you should look to the

sources listed above for more information. GH centers in Chelsea and Ann Arbor will often have a **delayed opening** at 10:00 a.m. in these situations, but there are times when it will be possible for us to open on time, even if the public schools do not. (For instance, if the schools close due to extremely low temperatures, we are usually able to open on time). If we feel it is necessary to keep our centers closed for the day, we will make that decision **by 9:00 a.m.**

So, sign up for OneCallNow messages and check *the snow line, Facebook, or our website for information when there is any question about centers being open.* Although it is our desire to remain open, many of our teachers live outside the immediate Ann Arbor area. We need to have enough staff at the centers to be in compliance with licensing requirements, and as always, safety is 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.

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 and start at 6:00 p.m. Sign up with Heike at 734-327-6126 or email her at heike.hampel@gretchenshouse.com.
Upcoming dates:

February 7

Taking it Outside continued from page 1

- Snow Golf – bury empty a can or cup in snow and mark it with a flag.
- Frozen balloons – fill them with water and leave them outside. What will happen?
- Paint on the snow with spray bottles filled with water and food coloring.
- Make shapes with your foot prints – run in a circle and then cut the pie... what other shapes can you make?
- Make snow angels (this never gets old).

Start your own list of winter fun, and don't forget to plan for hot tea or cocoa when you come inside... marshmallows optional.

~ Heidi McFadden





...because learning should be fun!

Staff News

Dhu Varren lead infant/toddler teacher, **Rachel Kriebel**, completed her associate's degree, and **Denise Lechtanski**, lead infant toddler teacher completed her bachelor's degree. Congratulations to both of you for your dedication and hard work!

Congratulations to Traver infant/toddler teacher **Courtney Rouse** on earning her associate's degree in the Child Care Professional program at Washtenaw Community College!

Congratulations to **Brad Guoan** for his promotion to director of our

Mt. Pleasant center. Mt. Vernon staff and families will miss him! We also congratulate **Lily Cortes** for her promotion to assistant director and **Andrea Turner** for her promotion to lead teacher.

Ashley Gray (Oak Valley) received her HighScope Teacher Certification in December.

Catia Medoro received her CDA from Bay Mills College in December.