

In This Issue:

Pg 1 A Letter From Ms. Donna

Pg 3 President's Letter

Pg 4 "Patty's Door" by Mrs. Nowicki

Pg 6 15 Things YOU Can Do to Make a Difference!

Pg 7 Excerpt from Grow Where You Are! by Eugene Cooke

Pg 8 Recipe: Apricot Oat Bars

Pg 9 Things to Do In & Around Irvine

Important Dates:

April 9-13

Spring Recess -
NO SCHOOL

April 19

General Meeting

April 20

Earth Day Carnival

April 21

Cleaning Day

Letter From Ms. Donna

By Donna Schwartze, Director of ICNS and Patty Nowicki, 4 Day Class



Happy spring! Don't you just love spring time? I grew up on the East coast and spring was always so longed for and the warmer weather so welcoming, that I still love the colors, smells, and signs of spring. There is, however, one aspect of spring that causes a small concern: the children have caught spring fever!

Have you noticed the higher energy, the louder voices, the increased conflicts (and just when everyone was learning to get along and work together) and the pushing boundaries behaviors? The children are expressing themselves and acting out their own disequilibrium - going from 4-5 and thinking about Kindergarten. They are eager and anxious at the same time. They are unfolding like the buds on the trees, and like all of nature, we need to be patient and enjoy the process.

You may have also noticed at preschool for the last 2 months some new faces that by now are very familiar. They are our wonderful student teachers. Let me officially introduce them to you now before they complete their classes.

Michelle Liao comes on Monday and Wednesday. She is a student from Irvine Valley College. Michelle grew up in Taiwan, she has been in the US for 5 years. Her previous job was as an International exporter in yarn for making fabric. Her husband Joseph is a businessman. She has 2 children: a daughter, a 16 year old Junior at Northwood High School, and a son, 11, in the 6th grade at Santiago Hills Elementary School. Michelle's long term goal is to have a childcare business either here or in Taiwan. She likes to read and watch movies, but her children take up all her time. (Does anyone relate to this?)

Stevie Wheeler is in class on Tuesday and Thursday. She is a student at Orange Coast College finishing her Early Childhood Development certificate, with plans to transfer to Cal State Long Beach for elementary school education. While continuing her education, she will teach at a preschool in Garden Grove where she has previously worked. Stevie lives with her fiance and his three children (on weekends) who are 4, 6, and 9 years old. Between the ages of 5 and 16, Stevie was a gymnast, with the bars and floor routines being her best events. Maybe she'll give us a demonstration!

Continued on pg. 2

Letter from Ms. Donna (continued)

Jenielle Chaney is the Wednesday and Friday student teacher and the exciting thing about Jenielle is that she is expecting her first child-a daughter-around May 24th. She and husband Todd-a chemical engineer-currently live in Aliso Viejo with their dachshund Parsnip. Jenielle has a BS degree in communication with a speech, language, pathology assisting degree for speech therapy. At the completion of her student teaching here she will be qualified to be a Master Teacher in a preschool. Jenielle is a seamstress and until recently had a business making dog clothes - are baby clothes a potential future project?

I love having the students in our classes - they add other, interested voices to the children's investigations and development. I know that all you parents have made them feel welcome and a part of our ICNS family.

In your files I put 2 articles I thought would be interesting and helpful to you as you traverse the bumpy, question filled road of parenting. I sure hope you have read them, please let me know what you think. We'll have a brief discussion at the April General Meeting that touches on these subjects. The 2 articles are: Top ten skills for Kindergarten and 40 Developmental Assets for Early Childhood.

The top ten skills for Kindergarten come from the Kindergarten teachers at Turtle Rock Elementary School, and they include the skills your child needs to be successful in Kindergarten. You can look at these skills and determine which your child is proficient at and maybe those areas that need extra practice. The Kindergarten teachers also recommended reading 3 books a day, having conversations with your child, and reading and saying nursery rhymes-three activities that the teachers at ICNS have also been vigorously promoting.

The Search Institute has identified 40 building blocks of healthy development-known as Developmental assets-that help young children grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. Developmental assets are positive factors in young people, families, communities, schools, and other settings that have been found to be important in promoting young people's healthy development. It is not only about what happens in the family, but also the school setting that greatly impacts your child. It is why the staff at ICNS offers the program, activities, and play investigations that we do-to create the best environment for each child's healthy development. (You will notice that these assets align with the 10 skills for Kindergarten.) On the back of the paper of 40 assets is some of the research and evidence that support the value and power of these assets. You can go to their web site and read more in-depth reports, and see the assets for children as they get older. I feel much of our work at ICNS with the children and parents is reflected in many of the assets-14 external assets and many of the internal assets that we are always working on. These things don't happen overnight, but through thoughtful, planned, and intentional work by the teachers and families together.

Thank you all for your work with the children: I hear many lovely conversations between the working parents and the children; I hear thoughtful questions that encourage thinking and problem solving from the children; I see efforts to keep our classroom clean and organized for the safety and best learning environment for the children. Just by being part of ICNS you are contributing to your child's healthy development by creating a nurturing, accepting, and encouraging preschool environment and by working with the teachers to create a consistent and supportive approach to fostering each child's successful growth. Keep up the good work and know that all your efforts with the children and at the preschool are most sincerely appreciated.

Happy Spring! aa- choooooooo!

ICNS President's Letter: "Teachable Moments"



With spring upon us, everyone is getting a little spring fever. My kids are extra energetic this time of year. My husband has been working on a special project in Alabama for the past six weeks so life at our house has been especially challenging for me. To keep my sanity, I like to get together regularly with a good friend of mine. She is the mother of three young children and is a former preschool teacher. As such, she tells me that she is always looking for "teachable moments." For example, when her 5 year old had a major meltdown one afternoon because it was time to come inside, her husband had lost all patience (as I would have done in that situation). She stepped in and calmly saw the situation for what it was ... not a power struggle between parent and child but a call for help from a young boy who had spent most of the day with a babysitter and wanted to merely connect with his parents. She got down on the floor with him and reached out. The result was a deeper understanding of him and his needs, and the rest of

their day was salvaged in a beautiful way. Her little story reminded me to look for those teachable moments, no matter how tired I am.

I came upon such a moment with Giuliana at Turtle Rock Park a few weeks ago when we went there for our weekly "Mommy and Me Outing". We walked over to the stream filled with ducks. It was a cool winter day with clouds in the sky, and I'm sure the water was very cold. Giuliana walked down to the edge of the water and looked curiously at a little "walkway" of rocks placed across the stream. She looked up at me, smiled and said, "What should I do?" I knew exactly what she wanted to do ... attempt to walk across the stream on the rocks. Given Giuliana's limited gross motor skills, I knew there was a high probability of her falling in. My first instinct was to say, "No, you may not", but I realized what was the worst thing that could happen? She could fall in and her shoes and clothing would get completely wet. I had a change of clothes, but no extra shoes. Hmm... we don't live far from the park, so I held my tongue and thought of what Ms. Donna once told me: "I never made a decision for my children." So, I decided to let Giuliana decide. When I told her she could walk across the rocks, she was thrilled. I didn't help her at all; I just watched the decision process take place. First she put both feet on the first rock, slipping in the process. Once she regained her balance, she was delighted. Then, she took a very tentative step onto the second rock with one foot. She stood there with one foot on each rock and a big smile on her face. Then, she was stuck ... we talked about her choices ... keep going or turn back. She thought hard for nearly five minutes and finally decided to turn back, but it was her choice. I'm sure she will attempt this crossing again, and I think I'll keep a pair of water shoes in the car, just in case.

I want to thank all those who offered to be on the Board for next year. Most recently, we have Eva Wagner moving from Membership Director to President, Priscilla Cottone taking on Treasurer, and Coco Chew volunteering for Membership Director. I am very relieved and grateful that I'll be leaving the school in such capable hands. Furthermore, our 2nd VP Erica Woolman is heading up a committee to fill the remaining slots. Please give her any support you can. For me, it has been a joy and an honor to serve our school as a Board member.

Carmela

Patty's Door: Keeping Kids Busy in a Creative Way

By Mrs. Nowicki, 4 Day Class



When my oldest child turned 3 I realized that he was not going to have the same type of play experiences that I had as a child. When I was a child I played outside all day in all types of weather. We kids had the freedom to roam the neighborhood. Parents did not worry about where we were or who we were with. We simply needed to be home for dinner. We were doing what comes naturally to all kids. We were playing, using our imaginations, creating worlds known only to us. I wanted my kids to have this same freedom, freedom to roam, to explore, to create and to come home good and dirty and hungry. I noticed though that the neighborhood I lived in did not seem to have many kids and I never saw many neighbors. Everyone had a fence so that stopped kids from running through the neighborhood. I will honestly

admit that I felt a little nervous about letting them out on their own anyway. So what was a person who wanted her kids to have this magical childhood to do? I started out by going to the neighborhood park every day. If I saw a mom with small children I would introduce myself. I had a nice backyard and invited families with kids over. I was always having some kind of egg hunt or gingerbread house decorating party around holiday times. I always had kids over to play. My kids liked to be busy as all kids do. Toys were something else I thought about. I can remember playing with Legos for hours. The difference between a Lego set then and a Lego set now is that the set we had growing up had maybe 5 or 6 different types or shapes. You had to use your imagination to create with Legos then. I remember trying to make a person out of Legos. It looked nothing like a person but I made a family anyway. Now, Legos have ready made people and many sets come in a kit with just the right number of pieces to make what is pictured on the front. I really tried hard to stay away from toys that offered a "right" way to play. Things like play dough and paint and sand allowed the kids to use their imagination and to create with the materials in many different ways.

Something I learned along the way was that setting up my home with areas that were inviting helped my children to play. Children do not perceive things the way adults do. When all their toys are thrown together in a toy box for example or put away behind closed doors on a shelf the kids can't see the toy to play with it. They have not established 'figure ground relationships' yet. I have a drawer in my kitchen full of stuff. It's a big mess and out of the 40 things in there I probably use only 5 on a regular basis. I can hold the picture of what those 5 things are in my mind and find them in the drawer when I need them. Kids can't do that yet which is why I am not a fan of toy boxes. I had to stop thinking of my house as being neat and tidy and began thinking of how I could set the stage for play.

Something I did when my kids were little was to get an old door. I put that door on top of two crates or storage tubs. Something low enough to be right at their working level. I got some low shelves and I began arranging the environment in a way that promoted play. I set the door away from the wall so we could all walk around it. The kids could work across from each other or next to each other. When my daughter was a baby I set her seat right on top of the door/table and she would watch her brother play. Sometimes they played alone, with me or with friends. My first door was in the garage. My garage became a big outdoor play space. We got to know a lot of neighbors this way. I had a door in the family room. Kids want to play near their parents anyway so the family room was the best possible place. I could get a few things done and be near them at the same time. I set the door up with invitations to play along with inviting materials

Continued on page 5

Patty's Door *continued from pg 3*

on the shelves. I made sure that clutter did not become a problem. It became fun for me to think of things to put out for the kids on the door. I always had play dough and would add things for the kids to use with the play dough. Things like small rocks or animals, feathers, straws, buttons, or anything you can think of. They would often find things outside and bring them in to see what could be done with them. Glue and lots of it was a necessary item. Some days the door became a road for cars or trains. My kids used the door for a long time. I think I had the door out till they were about 8 or 10 years old. It was a place for them to be creative. I found that my neighbors started their own version of the "door" set up.

We know how important play is to a child's well being. It is essential to the development of creativity, empathy, critical thinking, problem solving and making meaning. Our kids are not growing up in the same world we did. We have to work harder at providing children with the time, space and tools that generate play. I feel it is our obligation to do so.

When kids learn to play on their own it gives them a sense of independence and raises their self esteem. They learn that they are capable, that they can make choices for themselves. So I invite you to get an old door, paint it, and get your kids involved. Have them decorate it. Have fun being creative, surprise them with interesting materials. Consider where you will put that door keeping in mind that kids want to be close to their parents.

Something I had to learn to do was to let my children be. It is hard for kids to learn to be on their own, to play, to thoughtfully consider what their options are when adults are always hovering over them. Sometimes with good intentions we want to be involved, supportive and interested in what the kids are doing that we do not leave them alone. If you notice they are busy doing something, resist the temptation to ask questions about what they are doing. You can save it for later; maybe during dinner. I have found that dinner is the best time to engage your kids in a conversation. The earlier you start the more likely it is that you will continue to have dinner together as a family as long as your kids are living at home.

So set up your version of a "door", let your kids be while they are playing and eat dinner together as a family. You won't be sorry you put in the effort.

Fondly
Mrs. Nowicki

Here is a list of items/activities to put on your door. Remember to rotate the items/activities to keep the creativity, interests, and fun alive. Something to think about when you are considering what to put on the table is that children learn and explore through all 5 senses: touching, smelling, tasting, seeing, and hearing.

- Paper - all kinds, colors, sizes, shapes, old mail, magazines, brochures, etc.
- Scissors, glue, tape (all kinds, colors, widths)
- Writing implements - markers, crayons, pencils (lead and colored), chalk
- Stickers, paints, playdough, clay, finger paint - anything messy and fun
- Games, puzzles, building blocks, Legos, cars, doll house, magnets
- Recycled materials - paper towel and toilet paper tubes, egg cartons, oatmeal boxes

15 Things YOU can do to Make a Difference!

Courtesy of <http://4mamaearth.org>



1. Disdain the use of plastic bags
2. Grow one vegetable that you eat at least once a week
3. Work with your family in the garden at least twice a week
4. Use a broom instead of a water hose to clean your walkways
5. Plant an herb or spice that you use in cooking
6. Use a compost bin – it's easier than you think! (Learn more)
7. Plant a fruit tree
8. Plant an herb garden inside your kitchen window
9. Reduce your waste by purchasing bulk items
10. Visit a Farmer's Market to eat from local farms (Find a Farmers Market near you)
11. Donate to a food kitchen to feed the homeless (Find a Food Bank near you)
12. Use substitute homemade products for harsh chemicals to clean your kitchen and
13. bathroom (Learn more)
14. Reduce the amount of beef, pork, chicken, and fish from your diet by 20% or more
15. Once a month, learn a new recipe from another culture (Mexico, Thailand, China, India, etc.)

*This list comes from one of 4mamaearth.org's favorite papas, Dr. Bill Roley in Laguna Beach, CA. Dr. Bill Roley is an applied ecologist, environmental instructor and consultant-designer. He combines the disciplines of anthropology, biology, architecture, engineering, agriculture, and ecology to address the challenges of providing for human needs while maintaining ecosystem health. Food, waste, water, energy and shelter designs are his areas of expertise. <http://permacultureinstituteofsoutherncalifornia.com/>

Grow Where You Are!

An excerpt from the book by Eugene Cooke, Urban Farmer and Teacher



Local Growers

The variety of urban food production methods help to create community by sharing the responsibility with local partners.

As we embark on a local food project, there are some important factors to consider. Are we growing on our own land? How many people do we intend to feed? Will fruit trees be planted? If so, where? Are we growing for profit? How many people will help maintain the space? When these questions are answered, we can examine what strategies work best for our situation. Private home gardens are easy to maintain. The production is normally sufficient to augment the diet of a typical family. Edible landscaping can also be very beautiful and set an example for a neighborhood to follow. The social centers of our communities are often schools and churches. We are invested in these entities and they often have open land that can be used for cultivating food. Working with these organizations to grow food helps to facilitate communication between diverse cultures and generations. These group projects can produce more food by spreading the work load among a core of volunteers and students. Along with feeding the participants, many of these gardens donate surplus produce to those in need, having a direct positive impact in their community. Community gardens provide urban dwellers who have no access to lawns of their own an opportunity to care for a plot of land. Traditional community gardens distribute the plots on a first-come-first-served basis with a small yearly rental fee. The grower can use this space to grow what they like and reconnect to nature. Each individual can keep their own produce and still reap the benefits of sharing tips, tools and recipes with other growers in the garden. Urban mini-farms are producing food on vacant lots for individuals, restaurants and stores. Many of these mini-farms are functioning through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). In this system, people pay a subscription fee in advance for an agreed number of weeks. The farmer uses these resources to purchase seeds, equipment and supplies. The subscriber is guaranteed fresh, in-season produce on a weekly basis throughout the year.

About Eugene Cooke: Eugene has been helping people to grow food at homes, schools, churches, community centers, urban farms and more here in the U.S., Jamaica, Kenya and Tanzania. Eugene's talks are brimming with helpful information about how to garden but more importantly— he reminds us why we tend the garden: to be grounded, to have a sense of wonder about the world around us, to build community. Planting as a service. Learn more at <http://4mamaearth.org/grow-where-you-are/>

Recipe: Apricot Oat Bars



Ingredients:

Vegetable oil cooking spray

Filling: 1 (13-ounce) jar apricot jam or preserves,
8 dried apricots, chopped into 1/4-inch pieces (about 1/3 cup)

Crust: 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour, 1 packed cup light brown sugar, 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon, 3/4 teaspoon fine sea salt, 3/4 teaspoon baking soda, 1 3/4 cups old-fashioned oats, 1 cup (4 ounces) coarsely chopped walnuts, 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, melted
1 egg, at room temperature, beaten, 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Directions:

Put an oven rack in the center of the oven. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Spray a 9 by 13 by 2-inch metal baking dish with vegetable oil cooking spray. Line the bottom and sides of the pan with parchment paper. Spray the parchment paper with vegetable oil cooking spray and set aside. Filling: In a small bowl, mix together the jam and the apricots. Set aside. Crust: In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, cinnamon, salt and baking soda. Stir in the oats and walnuts. Add the butter, egg and vanilla and stir until incorporated. Using a fork or clean fingers, lightly press half of the crust mixture onto the bottom of the prepared pan. Using a spatula, spread the filling over the crust leaving a 1/2-inch border around the edge of the pan. Cover the filling with the remaining crust mixture and gently press to flatten. Bake until light golden, about 30 to 35 minutes. Cool for 1 hour. Cut into bars and store in an airtight container for up to 3 days

A Publication of Irvine Community Nursery School

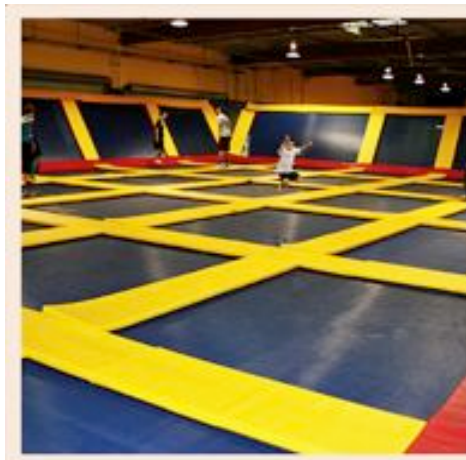
14341 Yale Ave.
Irvine CA 92604

PHONE:
(949) 786-2687

EMAIL:
Donnaschwartz@cox.net

We're on the Web!
See us at:
www.icns.us

Events: In and Around Irvine Sky High Sports Trampoline Place



Sky High Sports Trampoline Place located in Costa Mesa is the biggest trampoline (not bouncy house) place in the OC. A great way for your kiddies to get all that energy out and a great workout for moms and dads too! Sky High Sports has 5 different trampoline areas. the largest area is where you have the most trampolines and area to jump. There is also a smaller section where children 2-8 years can jump and you

don't have to worry about the big kids knocking them down, there is a foam pit where you can do tricks off of a trampoline and splash into the foam cubes, and even a section to play dodgeball and a section for private parties.

Visit <http://jumpskyhigh.com> for more information.

New Earth Drumming at Center for Living Peace in Irvine

Celebrate the spirit of drumming with family and friends! Connect with the deep pulse of magical rhythms to the heartbeat of the drum. Drumming can have a profound effect on your physical and emotional wellbeing. It can boost the immune system, provide social support, brain stimulation, and heighten self awareness.

This event is a great opportunity for a FUN family activity. Alejandro creates a joyous and exciting rhythmic interplay between participants of all ages and levels. Drums will be provided or bring your own drum, rattle or instrument. No prior musical experience necessary! Open to all ages.



Thursday evenings at 6pm & Saturday mornings at 9am.

Learn more at

<http://goodhappens.org/events/new-earth-drumming-workshop-2012-04-07>