



THE SOUTH SHORE NATURAL SCIENCE CENTER



Nature Center Preschool News

December 2015

It is hard to believe that December is here. We have been enjoying the extended warmer weather but there is a chill in the air as I write this message. November had some nice opportunities for building community with Stone Soup gatherings, making cranberry orange relish together, exploring how native peoples lived long ago, and discussing family traditions. December is exciting as the seasons change in earnest to a colder, crisper winter. It has been a tradition at NCP to celebrate the Winter Solstice, a time when daylight starts to return to our part of the world. We talk about why it is colder and darker this time of year and ways that winter can be the warmest season with warm clothes, fireplaces and family gatherings.

Please continue to label your child's belongings with their first name including mittens and hats. Also, it is helpful if hats and mittens are in coat sleeves and boots are placed below your child's coat. Teachers may miss items inside backpacks!

NCP registration for Fall 2016 is underway! Registration for current families is now going on through December and will open to the public in January. *Please Note: Returning families must re-register, students are not automatically enrolled in their current program. Don't delay—spaces fill quickly!*

NCP staff attend regular training throughout the school year. Recently, staff attended *Engaging Families in the Assessment Process* and *STEM in the classroom*.

Did you know?



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Family Advisory Council News!

The Family Advisory Council is off to an incredible start with fundraising. The Savers fundraiser raised over \$1000 for NCP and the Jumpathon raised \$2300 for the Rodman Ride for Kids. Thank you to all the NCP families—we couldn't do it without you! The Thirty-one fundraiser was successful, as well, and the Gift Drive for Homeless Families is going great with all 18 individuals receiving gifts from generous NCP families.

Upcoming meeting dates:

January 12th, 2016 6:30 pm

Dates in December

13th Storybook Walk Launch 10:30am-Noon

14th Gift drive donations--last day

22nd /23rd Winter parties

24th -Jan4th Winter break

28th -31st [Vacation week program](#)

Looking AHEAD

Jan 2nd Bubbleology (SSNSC)

Jan 4th School resumes

Jan 18th Winter Discovery Day (SSNSC)

Jan 24th Alligators and Crocodiles (SSNSC)

Nature Notes

We have been talking about evergreens this month and the red cedar is plentiful around our area. This "cedar,"

like most of the many other trees given that name, is not a cedar at all. It's a juniper. And despite having round, blue fruits that look just like berries and not at all

like cones, eastern red cedar is a conifer. If you are really observant in nature, you will see that under each red cedar tree this time of year is a pile of greens that have been "clipped" off the tree. The ends are loaded with little cedar berries. Cedar waxwings are known for their ability to process fruits, but many other birds join them at the annual fall red cedar berry banquet. Robins, mockingbirds, bluebirds, ruffed grouse, wild turkeys, goldfinches, flickers, and grosbeaks all like the berries,

as do a long list of mammals: meadow mice, bears, rabbits, foxes, raccoons, skunks, possums, coyotes, and deer.



Lunch Bunch is a wonderful extra social time for children. Children eat their lunch together, exchange ideas in conversation, and have additional cooperative play time. Lunch Bunch occurs on Wednesdays and Thursdays from about 12-1pm. Afternoon children may arrive at about 12:10pm to allow for morning dismissal and morning children should be picked up at 12:50pm so that the afternoon classes can transition to their regular class time. Ask your classroom teacher!

Swim

The NCP swim playgroup ends on the 18th of December.

Dates for the Winter/Spring session will be announced soon.

December Areas of Learning!

Science Winter animals, migration, evergreens, winter solstice, Deer

Literacy The Mitten, The Gift of Nothing, Goldilocks: putting on a play, over and Under the Snow, Grandpa Tree

Math Sequencing, patterns, counting, surveys

Social Emotional Care of Animals (therapy dog visit),

Fine Motor Scissors, Hand/eye coordination

Environmental Literacy Using inquiry as a way to learn about nature



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What is Environmental Education?

<http://www.naaee.net/what-is-ee>

Environmental education (EE) teaches children and adults how to learn about and investigate their environment, and to make intelligent, informed decisions about how they can take care of it.

EE is taught in traditional classrooms, in communities, and in settings like nature centers, museums, parks, and zoos. Learning about the environment involves many subjects—earth science, biology, chemistry, social studies, even math and language arts—because understanding how the environment works, and keeping it healthy, involves knowledge and skills from many disciplines.

EE works best when it is taught in an organized sequence. In schools, EE often reflects state and national learning standards. "Done right," EE not only leads to environmentally literate people, but also helps increase student academic achievement.

The International Journal of Early Childhood Environmental Education has more to say about this important work as it relates to young children. *The early childhood years offer tremendous opportunities to foster the child's understanding and appreciation of the natural environment as the basis of a lifetime commitment to caring for the Earth.* Early Childhood Education also benefits from strong connections with EE. It's becoming increasingly clear that positive interactions with nature are essential to a young child's holistic development. Without close connections with nature, a child's cognitive, emotional, psychological, and spiritual development is at risk of being compromised. Resources of the EE community can be tremendously helpful to early childhood professionals in connecting young children with nature. Consider, for example, the contributions of such EE initiatives as nature play, natural playspaces, and nature preschools on early childhood education and the lives of many young children.

Environmentally literate* persons know:

- That their daily choices affect the environment,
- How those choices can help or harm the environment, and

- What they need to do—individually or as part of a community—to keep the environment healthy and sustain its resources, so that people enjoy a good quality of life for themselves and their children.

Environmental literacy* promotes human health:

- Clean air reduces the incidence of asthma and certain cancers.
- Clean water prevents infectious diseases.
- Sustainable farming means nutrient-rich soil and healthier food for everyone.

What do environmentally literate* people do?

Environmentally literate people act on their beliefs.

This might mean:

- Buying "green" products for the household
- Using natural alternatives to pesticides—like marigolds—to protect gardens
- Attending community meetings to discuss complex issues like whether to build a new stadium, rehab the old one, or use the land in an altogether new way such as for public parks or playgrounds.

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*What is environmental literacy for young children?

Cognitive skill and abilities

- Seeking and accessing information
- Comparing, contrasting and evaluating information
- Thinking critically about possible solutions
- Specific problem solving skills:
 - Considering risks and benefits of alternate actions
 - Assessing consequences of actions
 - Communicating, implementing and evaluating a plan of action

These skills reach across all areas of development.



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