



## Nature Explore Families' Club visits our Outdoor Classroom

text & photos by Chris Kiewra, Family Programs Coordinator

Building a fort out of branches and large fabric, feeling soft sand between your fingers, and slipping down a slide may not be on the list of things you've done recently unless you came to our first Families' Club event of this school year.

The event was held right here in our own Nature Explore Classroom and everyone came ready to play! Inspired by the beautiful space, intriguing materials and gorgeous weather children eagerly became tour guides and led their visitors to their favorite activity areas to get busy. Participants were encouraged to draw and write about what was done or even make a map noting where they played in the outdoor classroom. Creating this page for a Family Nature Journal was a fun way to save memories of the day.

The morning provided opportunities



*Building a fort in the Messy Area of the Preschool NEC.*

for parents to enjoy time at school with their children which one wise family took advantage of hoping to increase their son's comfort and confidence when they are not here with him. Another family used the opportunity to reconnect by traveling all the way from their new home in Iowa. One child even traveled all the way back from kindergarten to see her old place, friends and teachers! Find your own reasons for joining in the fun next month and let nature weave its way back into your life.



*Eleven-month-old Maciek playing the marimba in the Infant/Toddler NEC.*

Our next Families' Club event will be Wednesday, September 23rd, from 5-7 p.m. at Bowling Lake in northwest Lincoln. We will take part in a Family Fishing night hosted by Nebraska Game & Parks. All the equipment will be supplied or you are welcome to



*Checking out the blocks in the newly renovated Building Area in the Preschool NEC.*

bring your own.

Don't forget that the Club can be fun for grandparents and extended family too so bring everyone along! If you have any questions or to RSVP contact Chris Kiewra at 476-8304 or [chrisk@dimensionsfoundation.org](mailto:chrisk@dimensionsfoundation.org)

### Preschoolers incorporate parking lot project into their classroom and outdoor experiences

text by Laurie Flynn, photo by Chris Kiewra

While the parking lot construction has been difficult for your dropping off and picking up, our class found watching the work extremely interesting.

Just the other day we watched the workers dump asphalt chips into the trench they made at the bottom of the main steps. Then we watched the roller flatten out the pieces. Several days later we were able to feel the new

hard asphalt.

Many children were interested in the types of trucks and equipment the workers were using. Several children knew their names and uses. All of this work inspired us to bring out trucks to use in the block areas and sandbox, and to place construction books in the rooms. So, if your child has shown a sudden curiosity in becoming a construction worker, this may be their motivation!



*Roots in the past, reaching towards the future*

**Before and after views of Dimensions' Nature Explore Classroom**



# Teacher's discovery of caterpillars leads to butterfly adventures

text by Nicole Carl; photos by Nicole Carl and Katie Mezger

The beginning of the school year brings many emotions for children and teachers such as the excitement of meeting friends and teachers and engaging in new learning experiences. One of our first learning experiences happened when nature was brought inside our classroom.

The Thursday before our Fall Session began I was cleaning at home. I had a flower bouquet that was dying but when I went to throw it away I noticed a large caterpillar eating one of the leaves! I couldn't believe my eyes!



*Caterpillar discovered on bouquet of flowers!*

After doing some quick research on the Internet, I discovered that the caterpillar was a Monarch. I learned more about the life cycle, what they like to eat and other interesting facts. Always having a love for science, I used my camera and video camera to begin documenting every moment of this caterpillar's life. Later that same night, I discovered a second Monarch caterpillar!



*The chrysalises hanging in the aquarium.*

I knew I would need some sort of container to place them in so the next day I came to school and found an aquarium. From my research, I knew that the first caterpillar, which I named Scooter, would be going in to Stage Three (molting into its

chrysalis) soon. The second caterpillar, Tiger, was much smaller and wouldn't be changing any time soon. Over the weekend, Scooter formed his chrysalis and Tiger was much bigger.

The next Monday (Aug. 24), I brought my new pets into our classroom for our toddler friends to meet and become active learners in their growing journey. Many of the toddlers made it their first plan of the morning to look at the caterpillars. Joaquin B. called the caterpillar a "worm" and watched it eating the leaves.

By Thursday the afternoon class watched Tiger begin his molting process. They noticed Tiger wiggling around at the top of the aquarium and changing colors from yellow, black and white to green. Every day after that, the toddlers would check the aquarium to see if the chrysalis had turned into butterflies.

One week later, when I arrived at school and checked on the progress of the chrysalis, I could see that Scooter's had changed. I could now visibly see a butterfly in the chrysalis and knew that Scooter would soon be a butterfly.



*One of the butterflies emerges from its chrysalis.*

As I cleaned up after lunch that day I noticed that the chrysalis was hanging differently. It was opening at the bottom. I quickly gathered the toddlers around to watch.

They were fascinated by the process of the butterfly emerging from the chrysalis. Scooter swung from the chrysalis to dry its wings. Then Scooter began to practice stretching its wings as the toddlers started taking "pictures" with a toy camera.



*Toddlers study the monarch butterfly.*

By Friday, September 4, Katie and I decided it was time to release Scooter outside. During Small Group time we read the story *Hungry Caterpillar*. I asked the toddlers if they knew what colors the butterfly was and they responded orange, black and white. Teddie K. told me "the butterfly changed from a caterpillar to a butterfly, and then flew away."



*The butterfly is ready to be released outside.*

We took the butterfly to our Nature Explore Classroom, opened the aquarium and let Scooter rest on my finger until the butterfly was ready to fly away. Scooter flew to a bush and then back to my finger.

The toddlers wanted to see if Scooter wanted to be on their fingers. Derek P.



*Derek P. focuses on holding his hand steady so the monarch butterfly can rest there.*



*The toddlers flap their wings on the Infant & Toddler Nature Explore Classroom.*

stayed still long enough for the butterfly to rest on his finger for a while. Then Scooter flew up into a tree and practiced stretching some more.



*The toddlers make colorful "butterflies."*

The toddlers pretended to flap their "wings" and fly like the butterfly. During Music and Movement time we used our scarves to help show the life cycle of a butterfly.

By Wednesday (Sept. 9), Tiger came out of its chrysalis before we arrived at school. When our toddler friends entered the room they were very happy to see that Tiger had become a butterfly. During Small Group time we read the story *The Crunching, Munching Caterpillar*. Tiger will be released into the butterfly's natural world very soon. It has been a very exciting adventure for the Toddler B teachers and children. We have learned so much about caterpillars and butterflies.

Katie and I plan on continuing this active learning with the children for several more weeks as we learn more about the life cycle of the butterfly. We can just imagine what else we might learn!

## Supplies Update...

Thank you to everyone who donated supplies to kick off another great school year at Dimensions. The teachers have been overwhelmed with the generosity of our parents! As promised, supply lists have been posted outside each classroom, one for Preschool North, Preschool South, Toddler A, Toddler B and Infant. These lists were compiled by all the teachers who use that particular classroom in the hopes to expand the projects they are able to do with our children, while alleviating expenses both for the program and our teachers. This is also a wonderful opportunity for children to contribute to their classroom in another exciting way by seeing the materials they provide used in the classroom.

We encourage parents to sign up to bring any supplies they are able to contribute by writing their children's name next to the requested supplies posted near the snack list and placing them in the supply bin by the requested date. The lists will change monthly, carrying over what supplies are not provided from the month before. Thanks again to all who have already contributed and those who will in the future.

*Jennifer Jorges, parent advisory board member*

## Resources

**Are You A Ladybug** by Judy Allen and Tudor Humphries

**Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?** by Bill Martin Jr. & Eric Carle

**Colours** (Snapshot Board Books)

**The Crunching, Munching Caterpillar** by Sheridan Cain & Jack Tickle

**From Caterpillar to Butterfly** (Let's-Read-and-Find... Science, Stage 1) by Deborah Heiligman and Bari Weissman

**The Happy Bee** by Ian Beck

**I Like Me!** by Nancy Carlson

**Toes, Ears & Nose** by Marion Dane Bauer

**Two Eyes, a Nose and a Mouth** by Roberta Grobel Intrater

**The Very Hungry Caterpillar** by Eric Carle

## Influenza prevention information

The National Center for Disease Control has been closely following the progress of the H1N1 influenza and recommends that you monitor the health of children and that they not be in school if they have any of the following symptoms:

The symptoms of H1N1 Influenza and seasonal influenza may include:

- Fever (greater than 100 degrees)- present in 90 percent of H1N1 cases
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Stuffy nose
- Chills
- Headache and body aches
- Fatigue
- Some people may experience diarrhea and vomiting

Any children who develop any of these symptoms during the day should go home immediately and should not return at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine.)

Those at highest risk of H1N1 are: pregnant women, children six months to four years old and anyone under 18 years old who has additional medical issues.

The CDC recommends the following good health habits and everyone can practice these at school, home and

work-to help stop the spread of viruses and germs.

Practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder-not into your hands.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth: Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

Stay home if you or your child is sick—again, for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine). Keeping everyone at home means they we will keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Practice other good health habits: Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious foods.

*from the National Center for Disease Control*

## Office Notes...

*by Linda Maack*

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we move to the ACH payment system. This will help us meet our budget in a timely manner. We understand that everyone's financial situation is different and we are willing to take that into consideration. It is important that we all work together for the future of our program.

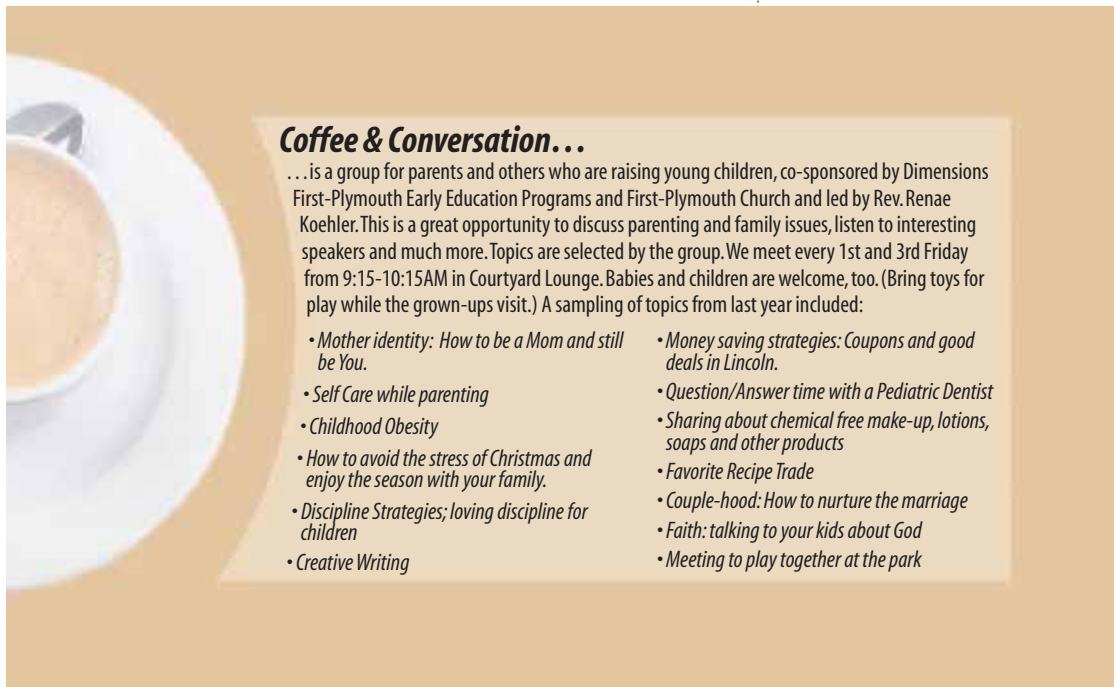
If you would like to purchase a POGO card, please let me know. There are terrific deals on restaurants and activities around town for \$20 each. You can see a sample in the Early Education office. We need to have a minimum of 10 cards to place an order. Thanks for your consideration!

If you ever have any questions about billing or POGO cards, please contact me at 476-8304 or email me at [линдam@dimensionsfoundation.org](mailto:линдam@dimensionsfoundation.org)

## Coffee & Conversation...

... is a group for parents and others who are raising young children, co-sponsored by Dimensions First-Plymouth Early Education Programs and First-Plymouth Church and led by Rev. Renae Koehler. This is a great opportunity to discuss parenting and family issues, listen to interesting speakers and much more. Topics are selected by the group. We meet every 1st and 3rd Friday from 9:15-10:15AM in Courtyard Lounge. Babies and children are welcome, too. (Bring toys for play while the grown-ups visit.) A sampling of topics from last year included:

- *Mother identity: How to be a Mom and still be You.*
- *Self Care while parenting*
- *Childhood Obesity*
- *How to avoid the stress of Christmas and enjoy the season with your family.*
- *Discipline Strategies; loving discipline for children*
- *Creative Writing*
- *Money saving strategies: Coupons and good deals in Lincoln.*
- *Question/Answer time with a Pediatric Dentist*
- *Sharing about chemical free make-up, lotions, soaps and other products*
- *Favorite Recipe Trade*
- *Couple-hood: How to nurture the marriage*
- *Faith: talking to your kids about God*
- *Meeting to play together at the park*





# FAMILIES' CLUB

## MONTHLY FLYER

The mission of our Nature Explore **FAMILIES' CLUB** is to enjoy time outdoors together.



**LOCATION:** Bowling Lake (NW 48th & W Cumming)

**DATE:** Wednesday, September 23

**TIME:** 5:00-7:00 PM

**BRING:** You may wish to pack water and small snacks for your family.

Fishing Night equipment supplied by Nebraska Game & Parks. Insect repellent and camera (optional).

**BOOKS:** Related books to read at home:

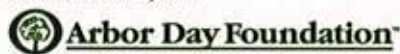
A Good Day's Fishing, by James Prosek

Wishing I was Fishing, by Eva Wells

Grandad's Fishing Buddy, by Mary Quigley

Please join us for some fun! Remember to dress for the weather!

A Collaborative Project of



visit [arborday.org/explore](http://arborday.org/explore)



Sam (pictured with sister Sophie) planted sunflower seeds last year during one of our greenhouse times. When they sprouted, he took them home and planted them. He was very pleased to show me the picture the first day of school and chose it to put on his cubby!

text by Suzan Haley, photo by Melissa Antinoro

## Toddlers practice trust and communication

text by Kathy Marshall, photos and captions by Kris Sieckmeyer-Hajny

Language. Trust. These are two areas Toddler A children and teachers are concentrating on.

Trust ... children are discovering that even as parents, grandparents or other caregivers say “goodbye” (adios) or “see you later” (hasta luego) they can trust that they will return. We have also practiced “leaving” by covering our faces with muslin cloth. We “reappear” by removing the cloth.

Language ... As toddlers begin to learn communication skills, children with hearing limitations or whose first language isn't English encourage teachers to rethink how to communicate with them. Using various objects or while reading books we are learning together both the signs for the colors red, yellow, blue and green, and the corresponding Spanish words (rojo, Amarillo, azul, verde).

(Photos below show children working with various manipulatives.)



Selah H. works with small colored blocks after lunch. She purposefully placed “people” shaped blocks on top of other shaped blocks until she had none left then continued a one-to-one correspondence using cylindrical blocks.



Benjamin V. works meticulously building with thread spools during Special choice time.



Everett G. builds towers with thread spools as Kale J. and Gavin G. watch and then follow his lead by creating their own.



After watching Everett G. build with thread spools Kale J. follows his lead and builds towers of his own

## Preschoolers engaged throughout each school day

by Kathy Tichota

Preschoolers truly live in the moment. They sometimes respond “I don't know” or “I don't remember” when asked about what they did at preschool. It often helps to ask them about a specific part of their day, such as “What did you do in music and movement time?” or “What did you do during small group time? ... work time? ... in the outdoor classroom?” Here is an overview of some of the things that children do during the day.

**Music and movement time...** Our old friend, Hicky Ticky Bumble Bee (a very friendly bee) visits to help children learn the names of their new friends. They also sing “Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes,” slowly at first and then using their speed buttons to increase the tempo. Soon we will be focusing on an important body skill, starting and stopping with the song “Oh, You Walk and You Walk..”

**Work time ...** This is the plan, do, review part of a day. Everyone is

learning about the areas in the room, the house area, art area, toy area, and block area. Each child makes their individual plan about where they will play. The house area and art area seem to be the most popular areas so far. Lots of creative projects are coming from the reusables in the art area. At the end of work time, we have recall time where the children share with their friends what they did during work time.

We end each of our preschool days with the “Peace Song.” Here are the special words to this song:



## Learning indoors and out comes naturally to preschoolers

text by Holly Murdoch, photos by Kris Van Laningham

Mac P., Rory R., Henry W., and Ms. Murdoch came upon a lady bug pupa on the Red Rubin basil in the Artist Garden. We added the basil leaf and the pupa to our north room science table aquarium.

Lucius G., Hudson W., Ivy J. and Briseis D. looked closely at the pupa with magnifying glasses and eagerly acted out the life cycle of the ladybug as shown in a classroom reference book. Lucius stated, “I am sure learning a lot about ladybugs!” Later in work time he let Ms. Murdoch know that he really needed a sticky name tag with his name printed on it. Ms. Murdoch provided the nametag and Lucius went back to his project.

A little later Lucius showed Ms. Murdoch his drawing of a ladybug made in pink marker with black



Mac P., Rory R., Henry W., & Ms. Murdoch in garden looking at pupa.

ink spots. In the book we read we had learned that a newly emerged ladybug is pale in color and that the black spots appear gradually. At the bottom of the drawing was the nametag, and at the top were sticky foam letters. Lucius shared that his plan was to stick the ladybug drawing to his wall using the sticky letters at



the top. He said the picture on his wall would be like the ladybug was on a leaf. Ms. Murdoch was excited that Lucius was so motivated and intentional about his project design.

# Children recall important experiences

text by Holly Murdoch

After our outdoor time we had Small Group. I asked the children what they thought was important about their plan at outdoor time (on the Nature Explore Classroom) and asked them to draw their important plan.



When I looked at Drew L.'s (age 3) drawing of what was important about his outdoor time Drew explained, "That's running in the garden. There was a pretend monster getting us." (Drew was playing with Lazlo W.) I recalled that Drew had shown me a bumblebee in the Artist Garden. A few minutes later I noticed Drew had added a blue line to his drawing. Drew said, "It's a bumblebee. It got with the other bumblebees. D-R-E-W, that's my name." (A model for printing his name was in front of Drew along with his drawing materials.)



Rory R. (age 4): "Once we were in the garden. I played tickle on the structure. I tickled Liem and Liem laughed. My new friend (Finley) said 'Why don't we play something else?' Liem said 'Why don't we play secret spies?'"



Look teacher, it's all about my name. "Lucy had been looking at her name card placed beside her drawing materials. She was motivated to print her name repeatedly. "And that's the climbing structure and it's green."



"The carrot is a carrot I ate at home for breakfast. And I ate cereal." Liem W. (age 4) copied her name from her name card.



"This is a self-portrait by Ivy J. (age 4). If you look closely you can see where she printed her name at the top of the page.

# Rainy day provides perfect ingredients for fun outside

text & photos by Kris Van Laningham

On our first rainy day at school, Ms. Murdoch and I took our students outside where the children experienced our Nature Explore Classroom in a different way. They shook the rain tree and watched raindrops fall out of the branches. They found a large bowl full of rainwater. Their bare feet and wet sand went together just like peanut butter and jelly ... or rain soup and sand! Even drying off the climbing equipment was an experiment for the children. It was wonderful to be outside and learn about nature on a wet day.



The preschoolers mix up a batch of "rainwater soup" as Ms. Murdoch watches.

## Crayon drawings done by Kris Van Laningham's students during Small Group time as they looked closely at plastic bugs.

Top to bottom to the left: Jackson S. (almost 4) drew a green bug. Tristan B. (3 and a half) with his drawing of a spider. Mac P. (almost 5) captured a dragonfly on paper.

## Imaginative playdoh

text by Tami Britton

Last week during small group time children had fun working with playdoh (which encourages creativity and imagination). Here is a sampling of what they created:

- Anthony C. made a cookie
- Monica R. made blue pizza
- Cade M. made 21 big knives
- Carson M. made pizza
- Logan H. made a ball, he said it ran away
- Reagan V. used a cookie cutter and made a star
- Alex V. made a star by shaping his playdoh into one with his hands
- Leighton S. made a 'coo coo face'



When Ms. Murdoch asked Lucius G. (at the Science Table) why he was using the flashlight with the magnifying glass he responded "I see more stuff!"

photo by Holly Murdoch

## Upcoming Events...

- Every 1st & 3rd Friday, Coffee & Conversation** for anyone caring for small children, 9:15-10:30AM in Courtyard Lounge. Facilitated by Renae Koehler.
- Sept. 23 – Nature Explore Families' Club** Let's go fishing! See the enclosed flyer for information about fishing at Bowling Lake. Email Chris Kiewra for more information at [chrisk@dimensionsfoundation.org](mailto:chrisk@dimensionsfoundation.org)
- Oct. 29 & 30 – No School**
- Nov. 26 & 27 – No School (Thanksgiving Break)**
- Dec. 9–10 – Parent/Teacher Conferences**
- Dec. 21 – Jan. 1 – No School (Winter Break)**

Nature Explore® Classrooms are part of a national initiative that we are working with in partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation. Dimensions First-Plymouth Early Education Programs is a non-profit 501(c)3. Newsletters and Program information can be found on-line ... [www.dimensionsfoundation.org](http://www.dimensionsfoundation.org)