



Sand, glorious sand!

text & photos by Tina Reeble

We would like to extend a very special thank you to Jay Merritt and the folks at Merritt U-Kart Concrete for donating and delivering the sand that filled our preschool sand box to the brim and allowed us to create a new sand area for the Infant - Toddler Nature Explore Classroom. The sand areas have been wonderful spaces for the children in our program to play and learn in. On any given day we have chefs, treasure hunters and construction engineers using their own ideas to create their play and at the same time experiencing key math, science and physics concepts while their bodies and brains are hard at work. The sand is an ideal open-ended material that children can use in a multitude of ways which supports their creativity and innovative thinking as well as the sensory stimulation that is so important for children.

We are so thankful for the generous support we get from our community members like Jay. Each contribution of materials or financial support helps us provide experiences for the children in our program that foster a love of learning, and help them develop their own unique gifts as they grow and learn.

Thank you!

The Dimensions Early Education Programs Teachers and Staff

Preschoolers enjoy field trip to Martin's Apple Orchard

text & photos by Donalyn Katt

Our class recently took a field trip to Martin's Apple Orchard. The children met Mrs. Martin and received containers to collect seeds and any other nature items in. Mrs. Martin showed everyone seeds that could be found in food, such as corn, sunflowers and apples, and seeds that could be used to grow flowers and other plants. The children were encouraged to collect their seeds in their jugs so they could take them home to share with their parents.

Everyone was able to look at a small corn seed and see how it had grown into a tall plant by walking through the cornmaze. Sam commented that the corn was taller than he was and that maybe some day he could be as tall as the corn plant. The children were also shown how to gather together corn at the top of the stalk to make a corn teepee.

As we walked around we saw bees, lady bugs, and other insects that enjoy the beauty and the sweetness of flowers planted by Mrs. Martin. The children were able to see how the leaves of a peach tree differed from that of the apple tree. Sophie told me as she was picking a leaf off the peach tree, "I know what grows on this tree, peaches!"

Around a bend the children found a hay wagon hooked up to a tractor and with the help of Larkin's daddy, the children quickly climbed aboard and were ready for a ride to find the apple trees.

Graham had found a green apple on the ground before getting onto the hayrack ride. He and Chase shared this apple and this encouraged the other children to keep an eye out for

the apple trees. It wasn't long before Leo spied the apple trees and pointed this out to the rest of the children. It was a mad scramble to find the perfect apple to pick. Each child was able to pick two apples. Some children went to the first tree they could find to pick an apple and some went farther down the orchard looking for the perfect apple. Emerson found his right away and began munching the crisp apple. With juice running down his chin and mouth full he could only nod yes when asked if the apple was tasty.

Our tasting didn't end at the apple orchard. Mrs. Martin then took us over to the raspberry patch where the children very carefully picked ripe raspberries to eat. Chase especially liked this area and kept picking raspberries as the others made their way back to the hayrack wagon. He told me, "I could eat these all day!" As Parker walked back to the wagon she caught a ladybug that was content to walk from one finger to the next. Parker stayed very still and watched the ladybug that eventually flew off.

Larkin was one of the children who



Children enjoyed climbing and playing on a stack of hay bales at Martin's Orchard.



Children enjoyed picking and eating raspberries.

went on this field trip last year and remembered that she took a pumpkin home. The pumpkin field was our last stop on the ride and the children hopped off the hayrack wagon in search of the perfect pumpkin. Ben decided that he wanted the biggest pumpkin. But soon this didn't make any difference to him when he realized that a small pumpkin was just the right size to fit upon his head!

The day was full of fresh country air, yummy apples and the fun of finding the perfect pumpkin!



Larkin recalled her trip to the orchard. "I liked going on the hayrack ride. I liked picking apples."

Roots in the past, reaching towards the future...

by Cooper Overcash, First-Plymouth alum

First-Plymouth holds a special place in my memory that will never be lost. I attribute this everlasting memory of preschool to the wonderful teachers as well as the unrestricted learning environment that First-Plymouth provided me as a child.

I attend First-Plymouth from 1992-1993 where Mrs. Jensen was my teacher. I remember riding on the

tricycles in the gymnasium, along with games of *Red Rover Red Rover*, *Come On Over* that were conducted in the same gym.

I am currently a sophomore at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln majoring in Economics. I view my experience at First-Plymouth as a very seminal part of creating the person that I am today. I believe this to be true because I think the social roles and personal interaction with

both teachers and students there was very special and significant. As I see my young cousins Ivy and Scout Jorges attending Dimension, I observe them not only maturing but also gaining social skills and a love for nature that is directly due to their experiences at Dimensions. I am so thrilled that my young cousins are experiencing the same wonderful learning environment I did over 10 years ago.



A visit to Grandma Sue's Farm

text by Karen Freimund Wills (Liem's Mom)

Holly Murdoch's class was invited to visit Ivy J's Grandma Sue's farm recently.

When we arrived, Grandma Sue was standing outside waiting to show us her built-by-hand barn and coops for her goats and chickens and a mini pumpkin patch. We learned that goats love to eat Animal Crackers as well as the plastic that Grandma Sue puts on the windows in an attempt to keep the barn warm. We also learned that chickens have bald spots on their bodies because it is the time of year when they molt and it takes nearly two months for them to grow back new feathers.

After helping Grandma Sue feed the chickens and gather brown eggs we sat at a picnic table to enjoy homemade pumpkin muffins, sliced Granny Smith apples, and apple juice. We then went on a short hike around the property to fill individual brown paper sacks with pinecones, leaves, sticks, and gourds.

We ended our visit by choosing little pumpkins that Grandma Sue had actually grown specifically for the preschoolers to take home. The following wonderful volunteers: Lucian's Mom (Sunny Gibbons), Ivy's Mom and Dad (Jen Jorges and Lateef Johnson), Lazlo's Mom and Grandma (Marie Woodhead and Sue Erdkamp) made the hour-long field trip fun and run smoothly. Thanks!



Nature Explore Families' Club explores Spring Creek Prairie

text & photos by Chris Kiewra, Family Programs Coordinator

Examining insects slowed by the cold, experimenting with charred wood left over from a campfire, scaling trees, and building teeter-totters from tree trunks and stumps were the most popular activities at our Families' Club event. We met in October at Spring Creek Prairie and the children led the way, showing us that they are experts in playing outdoors.

Spring Creek Prairie could be much like a science laboratory full of things to learn and be taught: species of trees and grass, names of birds darting amongst branches in the woods, scientific labels for plant and insect parts, and on and on. While all of these things are great for children to learn, it is important we watch for



Infants explore trees inside, outside

text by Denise Topil; photos by Krista Kuening

Children in the infant room have been busy exploring trees. We've gone on many "field trips" around the block to explore the trees and their many parts through visual and tactile exploration. Taste has even been a part of their exploration. We rolled the stroller or buggy next to the tree for children to feel the bark and visually see differences. We explored sticks, long and short, thick and thin. We checked out leaves, big and small, green and orange, and acorns that were small or big. As fall leaves began dropping from the trees, we were able to observe "up and down" with handfuls of leaves. All of these materials were then brought inside to continue exploration during small group time.



While we were exploring these tree parts inside we began reading the book **In My Nest** by

Sara Gillingham and Lorena Siminovich. This is a wonderful board book with circular cutouts and a darling finger puppet baby bird who



their cues for the best times to teach them. Watching the children in action on that beautiful fall morning was a reminder for

me that following the children's interests and playing alongside them is the most meaningful way to spark their scientific inquiry and thirst for knowledge. I saw children physically challenging themselves by balancing, climbing, jumping and carrying heavy tree limbs. Many were closely observing grasshoppers and watching to see how the warmth of their hands enabled the "hoppers to hop." One was guiding his parents through the experience by showing

them how to lie down in the tall grass and be enveloped in it.

Raising children who seek and enjoy time outdoors seems harder and harder to

do when there are so many neat toys and lures indoors. The rewards from breaking away and spending some time outside though are immense and the children reminded me, once you are out there, they know just what to do!

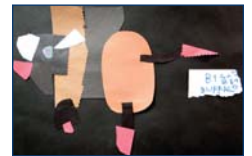


Join us for our next Nature Explore Families' Club meeting, November 21st at Pioneer Park Nature Center. Contact Chris Kiewra with questions or for more information at chrisk@dimensionsfoundation.org

It started with a cut

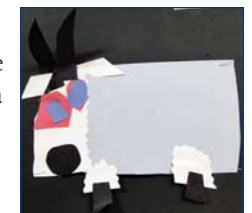
text by Heather Guess

Andrew was in the Art Area working with fancy scissors that make all kinds of interesting cuts. He chose a pair and made one cut on a piece of white paper and said, "Look, it looks like a mouth." From there he decided to cut other pieces of paper and connect them with tape to make the shape of a dinosaur.



After he showed me his dinosaur I showed him a book titled **Oodles of Animals** by Lois Ehlert. The book is filled with different animals and they all look like they are cut from paper with the same type of fancy scissors that Andrew had discovered.

Andrew told me he saw this book and it gave him the idea to make the dinosaur after he made the first cut in the paper. After looking through the book he began to choose animals to make so we got an assortment of construction paper and the scissors and he went to work. Andrew made sure each animal looked like the one in the book by using the same colors of paper and by measuring his animal according to the size of the one in the book. After his animal was finished he wrote the name of the animal on a separate piece of paper.



Requests

Do you have pants or sweatpants (or girls underwear) that your kids have outgrown, sizes 3-5)? We try to keep a supply available for accidents that might occur during the day. If you have any Dimensions' clothing at home, please remember to return it. We also would like to keep extra snow or rain boots on hand for wet days. Thank you.

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.

Nov. 14 – Families Matter Day At Lincoln Children's Museum, 9AM-12PM.

Nov. 17 – Nature Explore Families' Club Details upcoming or email Chris Kiewra for more information at chrisk@dimensionsfoundation.org

Nov. 26 & 27 – No School (Thanksgiving Break)

Dec. 9–10 – Parent/Teacher Conferences Watch for sign-up sheets.

Dec. 21 – Jan. 1 – No School (Winter Break)

Help Wanted Book Fair Volunteers

We are hosting a Book Fair Dec. 9–10 during Parent/Teacher conferences. Volunteer opportunities include decorating, assisting classes with Student Preview Days, and setup, staffing and/or packing up the Fair. Contact Heidi Thurber: heidithurber@yahoo.com

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 or contact earlyed@dimensionsfoundation.org