



## Valentine's Day plans

Your child is invited to bring valentines for friends on Valentine's Day (we'll celebrate Feb. 13 and 14)!

**Please do not individually address Valentines. This makes it much easier for children to deliver their valentines.**

Here are numbers to help you to determine amounts if you choose to send valentines.

- Preschool: 22 + 2T (T = teachers)
- Toddler A (everyone): 18 + 2T OR (your child's class only) 12 + 2T
- Toddler B (everyone): 17 + 2T OR (your child's class only) 12 + 2T

## Request...

...If your family has outgrown any of the following items of clothing, would you please consider donating them to our program:

- boots
- scarves
- mittens
- coats

We will have them available for any children who forgot theirs or who haven't dressed warmly enough for the weather (to borrow during our daily outside time).

## Check out...

...on Dimensions' or Arbor Day's website...our new public service announcement. Several networks have picked it up so watch for it!

## Bookshelf

*Annie and the Wild Animals* by Jan Brett

*Caps for Sale* by Esphyr Slobodkin  
*Daddy Makes the Best Spaghetti* by Anna Grossnickle Hines

*Dinah's Egg* by Lee Lorenz  
*First Snow in the Woods* by Carl R. Sams and Jean Stoick

*Gingerbread Boy* by Paul Galdone  
*How Far Will a Rubber Band Stretch?* by Mike Thaler

*I Spy: An Alphabet in Art* by Lucy Micklethwait

*It Looks Like Spilt Milk* by Charles G. Shaw

*Mama, Do You Love Me?* by Barbara M. Joosse

*The Mitten* by Jan Brett  
*Mushroom in the Rain* by Mirra Ginsburg

*Song of the Water Boatman* by Joyce Sidman

*Stranger in the Woods* by Carl R. Sams and Jean Stoick

*Tacky The Penguin* by Helen Lester  
*Three Billy Goats Gruff* by Various Authors

*Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak

# Scaffolding builds literacy connections

By Katie Sharp, Teacher

"I can draw my horse," Tess, 4 yrs, said holding up her toy horse.

The step-by-step process of turning a 3-D object into a 2-D drawing is very important. Often, children need to have an adult help them segment the object, possibly comparing it to something familiar to them, in order to reduce a feeling of being visually overwhelmed or over stimulated. I asked, "Is the body an oval or a square?" Using my own judgment of the animal, I chose a shape to relate to the horse's body and then another shape to give Tess a choice. Her ability to choose which shape matches the animal is a key part of her visual discrimination development. Tess replied, "Oval." Once she focused only on the main body of the horse, she was able to use close observation skills to find details. "It needs spots." "It needs brown."

Displaying her growing self-confidence, she continued, without prompting, to the next feature of the horse's body. "This he's neck." She drew a long rectangle for the horse's neck and proceeded to draw a square for the head. At this time, I felt Tess needed some help slowly and carefully observing the shape of the animal, "Tess, does your horse have a square head or a rectangle head?" She replied, after re-observing, "Rectangle." She adjusted the head on her drawing

and then began closely observing. "He needs eyes." "He needs ears."

At this point she paused. I prompted, "Tess, I notice he is missing something."

That prompt helped her to evaluate and compare her drawn horse to the toy horse. She began to draw the legs of

the horse and even included the hooves as a separate shape. She explained, "I know it goes on the other side, but we can't do it because we drawing it." This

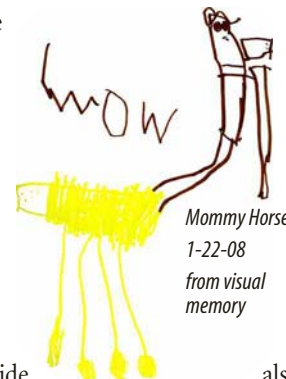
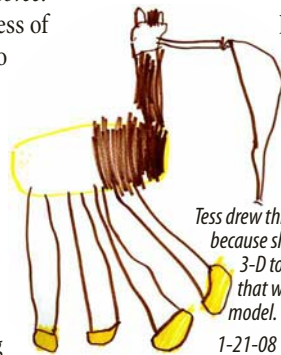
statement gives us the opportunity to see Tess' understanding of drawing a 3-D object. Not only does Tess understand that her 3-D horse is different from her 2-D drawing and that she can't draw on the other side (which we would notice from the drawing alone), but she is also able to verbalize that knowledge. The ability to verbalize that knowledge demonstrates that Tess has internalized the process of drawing a 3-D object and has an intrapersonal thought process occurring; she is thinking about her thoughts and actions.

The next day, Tess greeted me saying, "I forgot my horse. I can

make my horse without my horse." Now, she is not only comfortable drawing something she is seeing but also drawing a visual image from her memory. On this day, Tess created her horse in the same way she had before, but applied an aspect of her life to the horse. "This is the mom horse." With help, Tess wrote "MOM" to label the mom horse. Then, she said, "You make the babies." If I was going to draw these babies for her, I wanted her to have as much influence in the process as possible. I asked, "How many babies?" Tess stated, "4." After drawing four baby horses, with help from Tess, she wrote, "BABY" on the paper.

Lastly, Tess drew the dad horse and again, with help, wrote "DAD." On the second day, Tess used her visual memory and visual recall skills to help draw six horses. She also applied characteristics to the horses. This opportunity was a great way for Tess to continue growing in her literacy skills.

With one horse, some initiative, creativity, and teacher-support, Tess demonstrated her knowledge of the complicated process of translating a 3-D object into a 2-D drawing. She also used her visual recall skills, and was able to build vital literacy connections.



## Nature Explore™ Family Club braves cold January weather

by Chris Kiewra, Family Programs Coordinator

The Nature Explore Families' Club had a fantastic, frosty trip to Spring Creek Prairie in January! Several brave families enthusiastically hiked and skated around the prairie on a cold Saturday morning. With the pond and marshy areas frozen over, children delighted in slipping and sliding. Our mission was to find animal signs in winter and we weren't disappointed. Children saw



tracks in the snow and animal homes in the bank of the pond, in the tall grass, and even a nest in a low hollow tree stump sticking out of the ice. It was fun to follow the tracks and make our own. It was amazing to see the muddy beaver tracks on the edge of the pond leading right up to its hole and see branches chewed off all around the area. It was also fun to compare the prairie in the winter to how it had been in the fall when children took class field trips there. Some places were easy to remember but others looked quite different. For Elsa it was fun to give her mother and sisters a tour of the prairie she knew so well yet was new to them. Zachary closely studied a beaver home and footprints while at the



prairie. His teacher, Mrs. Murdoch, reports Zachary chose to move like a beaver at music time and then draw a detailed beaver at school.

Connections like these that children make with the natural world fuel their learning in countless ways! Come to the next Nature Explore Families' Club activity and join in the fun then watch curiosity flourish!

# Toddler B welcomes new teacher, learns about personal space

By Theresa Frey, Teacher

Miss Kristine Roit is joining Chris Kiewra and Theresa Frey in Toddler B. Kristine graduated from Concordia College in December

with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education with concentration in Early Childhood. She grew up in a rural area around Geneva, NE and is engaged to be married late spring of this year.

The children have been busy getting to know all about their new teacher and learning a bit about themselves as well.



personal space.

Imagine a child who is working on a puzzle. Along comes another child who inches his/her way into the “personal space” of the first child. In most cases, the children will bump/push each other which can easily

escalate to a shouting or hitting match. When this, or similar situations arise, a teachable moment is at hand. A simple explanation that child #1 is playing in this space/area along with a suggestion for child #2 to find a cozy/interesting space of his/her own can diffuse the situation quickly.

Toddler B teachers are using phrases like “I can see that (name) is playing in this space,” “Let’s move your lunch over just a bit so you’ll have lots of space for your things,” “stretch out your arms (during music and movement) to make sure you have enough space without bumping into a friend.”

As the year goes on, we will continue to help the children develop a sense of space and how they can successfully and safely move about while respecting other friends’ personal space.

We are also focusing on animal habitats and movement. Our classroom has been filled with penguins (not real of course) and forest animals. The book area has lots of picture books with penguins, polar bears and even some forest animals in their winter homes. Story time includes *Tacky the Penguin*, *The Mitten* and *Stranger in the Woods*. During a recent small group session,

children used white paint on dark blue paper to recreate the icy habitat of a penguin and later used crayons to create art inspired by the forest animals in *Stranger in the Woods*. The toddlers used real snow and small animals to recreate animal homes and tracks as well. We even filled our own mittens with small animals, just like in *The Mitten*. Our music and movement selections support this focus by including songs, finger plays and dances that recreate icy habitats, movement and sounds of forest animals. Special thanks to Mrs. Reeble for providing the materials and inspiration for our music and movement time.

As you can see, teachers are providing multiple sensory experiences based on Dimensions’ Look, Build, Move, Sketch model. Providing multiple opportunities for children to experience a concept or process information helps them to

better understand the world around them.

## Let it snow! Let it snow!

contributed by Kathy Perry

(Sung to the tune of “Let it Snow”)  
The weather outside is frightful  
But the mood inside is so delightful  
And since we’ve no place to go  
Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!

It was too cold (14°) to enjoy the snow outside the other day so Toddler A teachers brought the snow indoors. The children learned about space and shape by packing the snow into different-sized containers and watching new shapes take form.



Teachers are helping the older toddlers focus on space. No, not outerspace – our own personal space – the area around our bodies. Young children (and even some older children and adults) have difficulty recognizing each others’ “personal space.” We often assume that everyone is comfortable in close situations. It is often quite the opposite.

By helping young children understand where they are in relation to other people and objects, we can help them be safe as they move quickly about the room and also learn to respect other people’s

## Tiles donation popular in classrooms

contributed by Joyce White, Chris Kiewra and Kris Van Laningham, teachers

Thank you to Cooper’s family for their donation of Magna Tiles! They are used every day.



Anthony and Nicolas built a structure of our school. They



repeated this for several days and also sketched their work.

“That’s our first building of our school and we put in a town. The next day we made a new one and the other one was even better,” Nicholas informed us.

## Infant Room Notes

contributed by Denise Topil, Joleen Podtburg and Kris Sieckmeyer-Hajny

We are having fun getting to know our new friends in the Infant Room (welcome, Theo). We’ve also been enjoying...

...Gym time! It’s too cold to use our outdoor classroom so we are having a great time in the gym.

...Music Time! We are singing “Frosty the Snowman” as we learn to sign the word “snowman,” and also the songs “There’s a Little Wheel Turning In My Heart” and “Friends.” Our music plan includes waving scarves while chanting “I’m freezing” and dancing to the music of “The Skater’s Waltz.”

...Small Group Time! The children are using tree blocks and tree cookies to build with. It has also been fun to watch bubbles float in the air and try to pop them.

A big thanks to our parents for their contributions to our “Day at the Park” basket, too!

Photos by Theresa Frey, Chris Kiewra, Beth Pauley and Joyce White

## Parent partnerships strengthen school, community

by Chris Kiewra, Family Programs Coordinator

Partnerships with parents help strengthen our early education program. When teachers and parents work together, great things happen for children in the classroom, at home and in the community. Brooke Levey, Mark Humpert and McKenzie Barry are parents of children in our program that have found ways to professionally partner with Dimensions. Brooke works for UNL Extension in environmental education, Mark works for Nebraska Game and Parks, and McKenzie works for Lower Platte South Natural Resource District. All are partners with Dimensions and Arbor Day Foundation, as well as several other community organizations, in Healthy Families Play Outside (HFPO). Mark and Brooke also lead our Nature Explore Families’ Club with staff

member Chris Kiewra.

HFPO focuses on projects to create a healthier, better educated community in which citizens are connected to nature. Two important projects HFPO is organizing currently are **Lincoln Safari** and **Louv at the Lied**:

**Lincoln Safari** is a citywide, yearlong nature scavenger hunt that families can register for at any city library or any Nature Explore Families’ Club event. All registered families are given safari maps loaded with natural places to play in and around Lincoln and guidebooks full of ideas for things to do at each site. Souvenirs and drawings for fabulous outdoor-related items are also part of the fun for participants.

**Louv at the Lied** is a free public event at the Lied Center for Performing Arts on February 19th at 7:00 p.m. Richard Louv is the author of “Last Child in the Woods”

and founder of the Children and Nature Network. Louv is part of a nation-wide movement to connect children and nature and stem the tide of detrimental trends such as school recess elimination, hours of daily television viewing and the bombardment of children with scary media messages. In Louv’s book he points out the health risks associated with continuing down this path of disconnectedness with nature. Increases in childhood obesity, juvenile diabetes and behavior regulation medications can all be linked to societal and educational changes that have drastically reduced children’s time outdoors.

For more information on partners and activities, visit [healthyfamiliesplayoutside.org](http://healthyfamiliesplayoutside.org). Talk to your child’s teacher or any staff member about ideas you have for sharing your expertise with our school!

Nature Explore™ Classrooms are part of a national initiative involving the partnership of Dimensions and the Arbor Day Foundation.

Newsletters and Program information can be found on-line ...

[www.dimensionsfoundation.org](http://www.dimensionsfoundation.org) or [www.firstplymouth.org](http://www.firstplymouth.org)