



**Reminders...**

...if you would like to order a brick to be placed on the Preschool Nature Explore™ Classroom see the attached order form.  
...No school May 26 (Memorial Day).  
...Last day of sessions for Infant/Toddler and Preschool is May 29.

**Donations requested...**  
...for the Infant/Toddler Nature Explore Classroom area

- Marigolds in assorted colors
- Lemon Mint
- Sweet Basil
- Vinca (not the vine variety)
- Monetary donations for a new arbor (cost is between \$50-\$75)
- Gift cards to local plant stores or nurseries like Earl May, Shopko, Menards, Westlake Hardware)

**Thank You's to...**

...AJ Muldoon. Mr. Muldoon donated his time and talents to create over 200 drum frames for the children in our program. We appreciate his kindness and generosity.  
...Outdoor Solutions (operated by the Hendricks family) for their donation of a yard of black gold (a fantastic gardening soil enriched w/pulverized fertilizer) which we are using to top off the raised beds in our garden. Visit Outdoor Solutions at 10901 S. 14th St., 420-1477 or on the web at outdoorsolutions-lincoln.com/

**Bookshelf**

- The Jewel Heart*  
by Barbara Berger
- Down the Road*  
by Alice Schertle
- Saturday Night at the Dinosaur Stomp*  
by Carol Diggory Shields
- First the Egg*  
by Laura Vaccaro Seeger
- Tomorrow's Alphabet*  
by George Shannon
- Heckedy Peg*  
by Audrey Wood
- Chicka Chicka 1-2-3*  
by Bill Martin, Jr.
- Little Smudge*  
by Lionel Le Néouanic
- Not a Box*  
by Antoinette Portis
- The Tiny Seed*  
by Eric Carle
- A Seed Is Sleepy*  
by Dianna Hutts Aston & Sylvia Long
- Previously*  
by Allan Ahlberg & Bruce Ingman
- Under One Rock*  
by Anthony D. Fredericks
- Catch that Goat!*  
by Polly Alakija
- What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?*  
by Steve Jenkins & Robin Page
- The Family Book*  
by Todd Parr

**Reflections of, and gratitude for, the past year at Dimensions**

By Sue Erdkamp, Operations Director

As I look back over this past year, I can't help but smile thinking about all the wonderful things the children have discovered throughout the school year, as well as the amazing things they have taught all of us here at Dimensions First-Plymouth Early Education Programs.

I have been filled with a sense of wonder while observing the excitement of the children as they share their meaningful learning experiences with others. I was especially inspired by their interest in the prairie (Spring Creek Prairie) and their enthusiasm for the discoveries they encountered along the way. The art, links to literacy, movement, stories and songs that evolved, all spoke of the connection that the children clearly made with nature beginning with their initial visit to the Prairie last October.



Sue and Atticus in the Infant Room.

It is delightful to hear all the ways that the children are inspiring their parents to connect with nature. Parents are planting flowers and



Sue with preschooler Atticus on the Nature Explore™ Classroom.

gardens with their children. They are bringing their children to Family Nature Club events. Families are spending more time outside.

As we near the end of the school year, I feel a tinge of sadness thinking about saying goodbye to the families who are moving on; some of you have been here many years supporting us and growing with us. This May it goes even deeper as my grandson looks forward to being a kindergartner next fall. I have enjoyed watching Atticus develop since he began in the Infant Room. It has been such a joy seeing his growth and development and sharing with him his enthusiasm for learning. This is the real perk of my job! I will miss those daily hugs and conversations with him.

I am grateful to the awesome teachers who fostered his sense of wonder, encouraged him to live in the moment and enjoy it to the fullest, who danced, sang and discovered along with him, and

loved him. It is so gratifying to watch the teachers interact with all the children and share with them their gifts of discovery, wonder and learning taking place daily.

The Parent Surveys have been filled with favorable comments about the Nature Explore Classroom, the greenhouse and the daily outdoor time their children experience. Thank you for returning the surveys—they are very helpful to us. (There is still time to turn one in if you haven't already done so.)

I am grateful for the ongoing support from our families that make it possible for the staff to provide so many enriching experiences to all the children. Thank you to our dedicated classroom volunteers for their precious gifts of time and talent. Teachers are able to accomplish so much more with the support of the volunteers. Thank you, too, to everyone who helped with events or took the time to show their appreciation to the teachers. What awesome families we have!

I celebrate the incredible partnerships between our teachers, parents and staff. We are all passionate about providing excellence for the children—and it shows.



Atticus and friends at Spring Creek Prairie last October.

**Drumming project catalyst for families to see world with new eyes**

By Tina Reeble, Music and Movement Coordinator

If you happen to be in a music and movement session or passing by our Nature Explore Classroom, chances are you will hear the excited and happy sounds of children making music with their self-made drums.

For the final Arts project of the year, every child worked on creating a drum that was unique and very meaningful to them. The children used many of the techniques and materials they learned about over the past nine months and revisited their memories of the prairie as inspiration for the artistic expressions they chose to apply to the drum. They then had the opportunity to drum with Ben Norton again, along with the marvelous group of family and friends who joined. This has been an inspiration for the learning process to continue for our young children as they explore more ways to make music to express themselves.

As you begin to think about summer and spending more

family time outdoors, you can be part of that learning at home. Here are my top three suggestions to support your child's thinking and spend meaningful moments with him/her.

1. Make your child's drum important at home. Help everyone in the family find ways to make an instrument, make sounds with their bodies, and imitate the sounds of nature they hear this summer. Make up fun family chants. Play rhythms for each

other. Enjoy the spontaneity of a family band.

2. Take your whole family to visit Spring Creek Prairie. Listen for the sounds and look for the colors of summer. Ask your child what is the same and what is different from our field trip in the fall. Look for lines and dots, patterns and artistic inspiration. Take your crayons and sketch pads along. Write down the words your family thinks about. Sketch what you see.

3. Take time to be in the moment with your child. Catch some lightning bugs together, read your bedtime story outside or have a picnic lunch in an unexpected place. Take a flower walk around your yard and notice what is blooming and what insects are visiting. Show your child your own interest and curiosity and share in your child's sense of wonder!

Thank you for the tremendous support that you give to your child and our program. I wish all of you a happy summer.



The year-end drumming celebration was enjoyed by a standing-room only crowd of children and their families.



**Dave, Marcus Kastanek Build and Donate Salad Boxes**

We now have the luxury of planting into large wooden salad boxes, or flats, in our Greenhouse! Ms. Murdoch found a pattern and directions for building the boxes in the magazine, "Organic Gardening." Marcus and his dad, Dave, generously built five high quality boxes for us which are now being used to plant annual herbs, greens, and beets as well as lettuce. We are very thankful for the gift of these long-lasting greenhouse basics. If you see Marcus or his dad, please thank them. You are welcome to visit the greenhouse to see the salad boxes with all the healthy food growing in them.

**Planting and tasting lettuces**

Submitted by Holly Murdoch, teacher

Several preschool groups have planted a variety of lettuce seeds in the wooden salad boxes handmade and donated by Marcus K. and his father, Dave. Forellenschuss, Red Sails, and Mesclun are the varieties of lettuce the children have been learning about. Each has it's own unique leaf shape and coloring.



Hand-crafted salad boxes with lettuce varieties.

Tasting the young lettuce has been popular with many of the preschoolers. The lunch groups of Mrs. Reitz and Mrs. Guess ate fresh lettuce with their lunches recently.



Kai K., age 4, and Ms. Murdoch snip lettuce leaves.

Kai K., from Ms. Ragland's group, has been a regular volunteer tending to the lettuce in the greenhouse. Kai has learned how to



Kai sampling his harvest.

harvest the lettuce, too. "You cut the leaves on the outside (of the plant) so it can grow." Kai likes all three lettuces plain or "with sauce" but his dad, Jason, says he doesn't care for lettuce on his sandwich, yet.

Ms. Murdoch's group has misted (watered) and nurtured the growing lettuce. They also sketched the lettuces and learned how to print the names of the different varieties.



by Brooke N., age 4



by Kataryna M., age 5

As soon as it is warm enough we will be transplanting part of the lettuce to the garden.

**Try this at home:**

Join in the fun with your children by growing a lettuce transplant from our greenhouse! Just use a four-inch or larger container. See Ms. Murdoch for a free transplant and more information.

Photos by Tami Britton, Beth Pauley, Nathan Vieth and Joyce White

**Infants join in the fun of bird feeding**

The infants have been thrilled to watch the birds and squirrels dining at the birdfeeder that was donated to us recently. We placed a wooden box under the window in our room for the children to climb on (gross motor skills) to better see our animal neighbors.

When we filled our feeder for the first time we compared it to the one by the Toddler room window and talked about how they match (math). Next we used small scoops to dip up the birdseed. The infants were able to feel the grains and explore dumping and filling with the birdseed (more math: full, empty, etc.). Some of the birdseed even

made it into the bird feeder!

While we were outside we installed the shepherd's hook and feeder. Allison experienced the weight and height of the bird feeder as she carried (pulled) the feeder over the grass to the hook.

Our young children are developing nurturing characteristics by learning to feed the birds (social/emotional development), experiencing many math and science concepts and developing language and literacy skills through hearing new vocabulary and learning new sign language for the animal names. All of this learning is because of active bird watching!



Ms. Topil and the infants spent some time outside exploring birdseed and working to fill a birdfeeder. Ruyter J. helps fill the birdfeeder using a small scoop.



Harry F., age 4

**Painting with watercolors**

**Harry:** It's really awesome. It's a spring flower. It grew all the way up to the sky.

- Max:** It has to dry. It's a surprise!
- Zorte:** It's a airplane to fly to space.
- Josie:** It's a cool picture. It's a sun, and a rainbow thing.
- Lex:** It's the woods.
- Tate:** My picture is showing the paint.
- Audrey:** I wrote it. I wrote a picture for my mom.
- Kaitlyn:** A rainbow in the sky. A rainbow and a tomato. The sun came out and the moon wouldn't come out.

contributed by Tami Britton, teacher

**Blake:** This is my dream come true because I never put water on paint. It's a rocket launcher and the earth.



Audrey, age 3 and Tate R., age 3



L-R: Zorte E., age 4; Josie D., age 4; and Kaitlyn S., age 4

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)