



UPCOMING EVENTS...

Aug. 28 or 29 – Classroom Volunteer In-Service Meeting

If you volunteered to help in the classroom or with any of our Family Events this year, this meeting's for you! It will take place from 9:15-11:00AM in the Resource Room.

Sept. 1 – No School (Labor Day)

Sept. 1 – Payments due no later than today

(Did you find the payment envelope in your child's cubby?) We so appreciate your timely payments. They help us very much. Note: Please make sure to make your check out to Dimensions. It's not too late to sign up for automatic withdrawal and if you have any questions about payments, please speak with Linda Maack, our Financial Director.

Sept. 6 – Nature Explore Families' Club

Everyone is welcome to join us for the first Nature Explore Families Club gathering of the new school year from 10:30 a.m. to Noon at the Pioneers Park Nature Center for some outdoor fun! Contact Chris Kiewra for more information at chrisk@dimensionsfoundation.org

Sept. 11 – Robin Moore

Robin Moore will be presenting "Natural Play Spaces: Their Value for Children and Families," UNL City Campus, Kimball Hall, 7 p.m. Free and open to the public. Visit healthyfamiliesplayoutside.org for details.

Sept. 16 – Parent & Caregiver Workshop

An opportunity for adults to learn about, discuss, and actually experience learning in our outdoor classroom from 6:30–8:00 p.m. in the North Preschool Room and Nature Explore Classroom.

Oct. 4 – Pancake Breakfast & Garage Sale

Our first event of the year features a pancake breakfast (with fun pancake toppings) and a garage sale. Each year we ask families to donate outgrown toys or clothes so we can share our resources with each other. This is a great way to find a "new" toy or outfit for your child(ren). Mark your calendars for this fun chance to get to know other parents and enjoy a low-key morning with your family.

Thanks to Macaroni Grill for catering lunches twice to our staff during In-Service Week!

Photographs contributed by Beth Pauley and Ann Watt

From the Dimensions Early Education Co-Directors

Dear Families,

Welcome to the 2008-2009 school year. We are looking forward to wonderful adventures throughout the year and very much invite your ideas, suggestions and active involvement throughout the year.

We want to thank all teachers and administrative staff who have worked so hard to prepare for a new year. Each and every person is to be commended for the level of dedication, commitment and professionalism that they bring to this important work. And, we want to thank all of you for sharing your very precious children

with us, and supporting all of our efforts to provide the very best early education experiences possible.

We are excited about all of the wonderful resources for children that we are developing through our on-going research and our partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation to take our Nature Explore program to teachers, children and families all over the country.

We also commend all of our teachers for their on-going professional growth as they support and observe children daily; engage in on-going research and field-testing; participate

in focus group interviews; or present workshops to our own staff or other educators. As we watch all of our teaching staff, there is a strong commitment to children's individual needs and interests. We see teachers sharing their own unique gifts with the rest of the staff for the good of all children.

Each year, families also share gifts with us in many ways. We couldn't do what we do without you. Thank you for partnering with us. Together we are all better! Here's to a great year!

Sue Erdkamp & Michelle Zimmer, co-directors
Dimensions First-Plymouth Early Education programs

In-Service week ends with "speaking our dreams"

Dimensions' teaching (and administrative) staff completed a busy week of preparation for the new school session with a presentation by Executive Director Nancy Rosenow. This time together is just one example of the professional development that the Dimensions' staff experiences throughout the school year.

Nancy concluded her presentation by quoting Dom Hélder Câmara: "When we are dreaming alone it is only a dream. When we are dreaming with others, it is the beginning of reality." She asked everyone to commit to paper their dreams for the upcoming year. The dreams were then attached

to dream catchers.

Some of the dreams shared during the In-service for the administration team and teaching staff:

Greater outreach to families.

Laugh, Play, Enjoy!

To connect and build quality relationships with children, families and staff.

That Nature Explore Classrooms will become the standard in middle and secondary schools, that older youth will build and grow their dreams in block areas and messy areas throughout the U.S.

To evolve the Nature Explore Classroom into the premier Nature Explore program in the country.

To publish our own books to support literacy in nature by featuring visual images!

To help each child and teacher experience joy in digging in the dirt and getting dirty.

To create a natural shade over our digging space and sandbox areas, and get children and families involved in the process.

That each and every one of us will feel engaged and inspired to the degree that we forge a connection as interwoven as this dream catcher.

To bring more of the out doors in doors to our classrooms.

That Nature Explore becomes a way of teaching across all age groups worldwide.

To have kids publish their stories inspired by nature.



Nature Explore Family Club News

by Chris Kiewra, Family Programs Coordinator

Have you been hearing all the buzz about getting children outside lately?

At Dimensions First-Plymouth Early Education Programs teachers continually talk about the importance of daily time outdoors; our city is embracing the natural treasure hunt, Lincoln Safari, with over 4,000 people playing; and, the Nebraska Department of Education has issued a [Call to Action](#) to reconnect children and nature. Encouraging children to spend time outdoors is truly a growing trend.

There are several exciting opportunities in September for you to learn more about why this is so important and things you as parents and guardians can do to make your time outdoors fun and rewarding. An added bonus to remember in these economic times... playing outside is free and so are each of these September events! See the Upcoming Events sidebar for additional information on the following events:

Sept. 6 – Nature Explore Families' Club
Sept. 11 – Robin Moore
Sept. 16 – Parent & Caregiver Workshop

Ripples of wonder from the recent Working Forum on Nature Education

by Tina Reeble, Dimensions Workshop Coordinator

In July 2008 representatives from the early childhood, environmental/conservationist, and landscape architecture fields reunited at the Working Forum on Nature Education. They came together to share transformations they have witnessed as a result of the action plans to connect children more deeply with nature that were developed at the first Working Forum in 2006.

The forum community also welcomed new faces who were able to add valuable depth and energy to the collaborative work that is being done. The forum setting was a premiere showcase for our midwest summers as the staff at Arbor Day Farm and Lied Lodge hosted participants from over

25 countries.

Dimensions Educational Research Foundation, Arbor Day Foundation, World Forum Foundation and the Leadership team of the Nature Action Collaborative for Children were instrumental in the planning, and sponsorship of the event.

The forward thinking and positive action that these organizations embody created an atmosphere of intense inspiration and commitment to action. Participants left believing that, by working in collaboration with each other, everyone can bring about the change that is needed to connect children with nature in more meaningful ways, thus nurturing their sense of wonder for the well-being of all the world's children and for the stewardship of our Earth.

During the closing ceremonies, an international Call to Action Paper was presented. This position paper on the importance of making nature an integral part of children's daily lives is an important advocacy tool that now has the endorsement of leadership across the globe.

So what does this mean for your child? First-Plymouth Early Education Programs is a facet of Dimensions. The work that your child engages in every day provides the evidence that supports our belief that children flourish when they have daily hands-on interactions with the natural world, supported by a caring adult. As the teaching staff continues to work closely with your child, making close observations about the natural world and their connection to it, the teachers

are also working as co-researchers collecting stories and insights to the thinking and development of your son or daughter. This information is then added to a larger body of research that is analyzed and used to support the development of a large array of resources that Dimensions and Arbor Day have collaboratively developed called Nature Explore. These resources are available to organizations across the country who are asking for help to make their vision for children and nature become a reality.

In effect, the daily work and play of your child is the splash in the lake that travels through ripples across the waters and has helped children across our nation and world have new opportunities to experience nature and their own sense of wonder.



Traveling exhibit in St. Louis, "Trees Inside and Out," impresses teachers

by Kris Van Laningham, teacher

Tina Reeble organized a "road trip" to St. Louis to experience the traveling exhibit titled "Trees Inside and Out" (sponsored by Dimensions, Arbor Day Foundation and Doubletree Hotels). The exhibit encourages families to interact with trees in a variety of ways. When Tina said the exhibit would be

at the Missouri Botanical Garden (the nearest it would ever be to Lincoln) my ears pricked up even more. I had visited the Botanical Gardens two years ago when Dale Chihuly had a glass exhibition and knew that an amazing space would be housing the traveling exhibit.

Ann Watt, Sue Erdkamp, Tina and Rick Reeble and I went to St. Louis in July to participate in a Community Forum promoting Nature Education. Doubletree Hotels provided the hotel rooms for us and a space for the Forum to be held. Participants shared information and the energy coming from the people in the room was incredible. They were filled with enthusiasm in getting families outside enjoying the natural world.

The afternoon after the Forum we headed to the Botanical Gardens and were greeted with the art of Niki de Saint Phalle. She created amazing mosaics which were displayed throughout the Gardens.

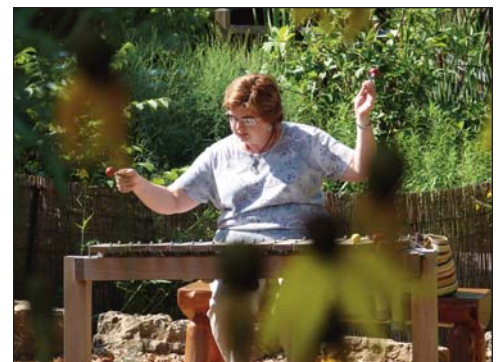
Next we headed to the "Trees Inside and Out" to see what had been only a dream a few years ago. Children were smelling scents of trees, climbing into "trees" and sliding down into a pile of leaves and using magnifying glasses to see the legs of a bee.

One of the more amazing parts of the exhibit was an area where children interacted with a video camera. First they dressed up as an insect or a bird. Then they pretended to fly like a bird or move like an insect while their movements were captured on a video screen for everyone, including them, to see! This allowed each child to see what they really looked like as they "flew" and moved about. A little girl dressed as a ladybug told Tina (dressed as a bird) to fly and try to catch her. This was just one of many learning/interactive displays for children.

Our next stop at the Botanical Garden was the Children's Garden. We went to the Nature Explore Classroom first.

Staff from the Botanical Garden had scheduled a Design Consultation with one of our Nature Explore Landscape Architect-Educator Teams to develop a design for the outdoor space. Then educators at the Garden attended several of Dimensions' workshops on Learning with Nature and used their new knowledge to enhance their new Nature Explore Classroom. The different areas (similar to our Nature Explore Classroom at Dimensions) had their own flavor because of the environment the space was located in and new ideas added by the staff. The Children's Garden extended to an interactive water play area, a "Secret Garden" and a vegetable garden.

The time spent with people excited about children and nature was so rewarding. It was a dream turning into reality to see the results of our research and efforts as a staff in Lincoln, Nebraska spreading to so many parts of the United States.



Nature Explore™ Classrooms are part of a national initiative that we are working with in partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation.

Newsletters and Program information can be found on-line ... www.dimensionsfoundation.org