



## UPCOMING EVENTS...

### Oct. 11... Nature Explore Family Club at Spring Creek Prairie

See the attached flyer to learn more about this fun family event!

### Oct. 28-29... Wear your Halloween costumes to school Tuesday & Wednesday

### Oct. 30-31... No School

#### Reminders...

♥ Be aware of the weather when dressing your child for the day. We spend as much time outside as possible and want everyone to be comfortable.

♥ Check out the flyer on the Church Chili Feed. We will have a team participating and we also benefit from some of the proceeds.

♥ You can still sign up for ACH automatic withdrawal to pay your tuition.

♥ A great opportunity to discuss parenting and family issues, listen to interesting speakers and much more is happening the first and third Wednesdays of each month from 9:15-11:15 in Courtyard Lounge. Call the office at 476-8304 for more information.

#### Thanks to...

...those of you who have provided snacks for our classrooms thus far. The children and staff greatly appreciate it. Be sure to keep checking the snack sheets in the hallways for other opportunities to bring snacks.

...Bob Hendricks of Outdoor Solutions for the loan of their wheelbarrow and donation of 8 yarrow plants.

#### Donations...

📷 Documentation in the classrooms is a daily occurrence and many of the teachers bring their own digital cameras to capture the exciting learning that your children experience. We would eventually like to have digital cameras available to each group. If you are looking for tax-deductible donations and/or have upgraded cameras lately and don't know what to do with your old camera we would give it a good home!

🛠 Ms. Murdoch works very hard to keep the Nature Explore Classroom looking like it does. A 4-wheel wheel barrow would make it easier for her to move mulch and plants around.

🌿 We are committed to feeding birds on the Nature Explore Classroom. Donations of safflower, black oil sunflower seed and mixed birdseed are always needed.

## Teacher observations from afternoon Work Time

by Holly Murdoch, Teacher

**Activity:** *Liem W. and Ms. Murdoch picked tomatoes in the rain.*

**Materials:** *metal colander, tomato plants, rain jackets*

#### Key Skills:

- *Language... asking for what she wanted*
- *Social... sense of self, independence*
- *Knowledge about the world, food preparation, gardens*
- *Motor skills... in using colander, picking, washing*
- *Music as part of Liem's expressive language*
- *Movement, gestures incorporated into Liem's communication*

#### Descriptive Note:

A preschool child stated he was hungry and pointed to crackers on the counter. The child eats almost all simple carbohydrates so Ms. Murdoch asked him if he would like to pick some tomatoes to eat from the Nature Explore Classroom garden. He said no. Liem heard this conversation and asked to pick tomatoes.

Liem "Can I help pick tomatoes?"

Ms. Murdoch "It has started to rain."

Liem "We can wear a rain jacket."

Ms. Murdoch decided to accommodate Liem because of her strong desire and problem solving suggestion to wear raincoats.

We both put on raincoats and went to

## Adventures with Chard

by Erika Kuebler Rippeteau, Parent

The greenhouse and outdoor vegetable garden areas of the Nature Explore classroom are special parts of the natural play space at Dimensions. When I picked my 4-year-old daughter Lily up from preschool recently, I remarked to Ms. Murdoch how beautiful the chard in the garden looked. She enthusiastically offered us some, and we took it home to use with our family's dinner.

Lily washed each piece, and we marveled together at the color, texture, and size of the leaves. She tasted the raw chard and thought she might like it better cooked, so we worked together to prepare it. I chopped, and then Lily sauteed the deep scarlet stems with olive oil, garlic, and red pepper flakes for about five minutes, until the stems were tender. After Lily tore up the leaves and added them into the pan to cook, covered, for about three minutes, we seasoned the dish with salt, pepper, and

the greenhouse to get a metal colander to hold the tomatoes. We walked to the tomato patch in the rain, Liem carrying the colander.

Ms. Murdoch: "Which ones do we pick?"

Liem: "Uhm, red."

She began to pick.

Liem softly singing, "Red tomatoes."

Liem softly singing, "Tomatoes," rhythmically eight times in a row.

We moved to another spot where it was easier to reach.

Liem: "Oh! Big ones!"

As we walked back to the building Liem sang, "I love you, you love me." This is the theme song from the television show Barney.

Liem "The rain is washing the tomatoes."

In the classroom

Ms. Murdoch suggested washing the tomatoes a little more. Without a pause Liem took the colander of tomatoes and put it under the running water. She washed them by moving the whole colander in a circular motion with both hands, and by washing them individually, rotating them in her fingers under the stream of water. She looked closely at each of about eight tomatoes.

Liem: "Sometimes my Dad doesn't like tomatoes." Liem continued inspecting the tomatoes. Why do they crack?"

Ms. Murdoch: "Sometimes it rains and sometimes we water the plants. If the plants get too dry sometimes the tomatoes crack."

Liem: "This one has a crack." She threw it in the waste basket next to the sink.

Ms. Murdoch: "Watch." Ms. Murdoch ate a cracked tomato.

Ms. Murdoch: "Are they clean? Do you want to eat one now?" Liem held one up, looked at it, but didn't eat it.

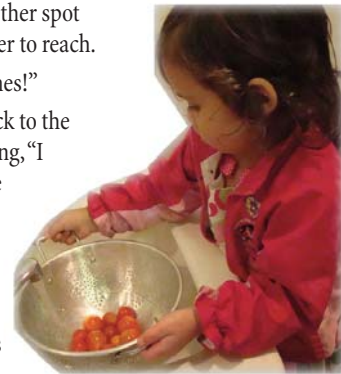
Ms. Murdoch: "We could cut it in half." Liem held out one hand and moved it in a cutting gesture, seeming to think about cutting the tomato.

Ms. Murdoch and Liem got out a plastic knife and paper towel. Liem tried to cut the tomato

and looked at Ms. Murdoch after having no success.

"Cut back and forth." Ms. Murdoch gestured to Liem with a hand motion. Liem cut the tomato into four parts but still did not taste the tomato. Ms. Murdoch suggested to Liem that she taste the tomato.

(At this point, Liem got up and went to a new area in the Work Time room to play.)



(photo Holly Murdoch)  
Liem prepares to wash the tomatoes.



(photo Erika Kuebler Rippeteau)  
Lily washes each piece of chard in her kitchen.

the juice of half a fresh lemon. To my husband and I, the finished chard tasted delightfully fresh, healthy, and delicious.

While the end result was not a mealtime favorite for Lily or her brother, she loved preparing food she helped to grow. I have no doubt that someday, because of her experiences tending vegetables at preschool and in our home garden, she'll enjoy eating a wider variety of food!

## Share your Halloween costumes with us

Your child is invited to wear a Halloween costume on Tuesday, October 28, and/or Wednesday, October 29 (remember, we are closed October 30 and 31). Please let your child be your guide.

Some children love wearing Halloween costumes and some do not. Sometimes children just like to bring a costume to show... and that is just great. There is a fine line between fantasy and reality for young children. We try to keep things fun... but not scary for children.



(photo Denise Topil)  
Halloween was a colorful time for the Infant Room last year.

# Observations from worktime: creating a birdfeeder

Notes and photographs by Holly Murdoch, Teacher  
Caden Z. invested his entire Worktime in creating a birdfeeder in the Art Area. He intended to create a butterfly house but changed it to a bird feeder.

Caden: "Seeds go here (point), here, here, here, and here." "You have 5 places for food," Ms. Murdoch said.

Caden: "How heavy are birds?" Ms. Murdoch replies, "Wow! That's a good question!"

Caden: "I'm going to make one of those things they sit on. This is gonna be a water place. This is going to be a water cup." He was holding a plastic pudding cup that he had selected from a tub of recyclables.

Ms. Murdoch: "Maybe they're about as heavy as my hand?" She put her hand on Caden's hand.

Mrs. Haley was working in the room and asked, "Birds come in all sizes don't they?"



Caden attached craft sticks to the birdfeeder with tape.

Ms. Murdoch asked, "Why do you want to know how heavy birds are?"

Caden: "They might break the sticks off."

"Do you think up here needs a stick?" Ms. Murdoch asked. Caden pointed to the very top of the feeder. Ms. Murdoch asked, "What do you think? Caden was quiet; it looked like he was thinking.

Ms. Murdoch asked, "Do you want a hand putting on a stick? Caden said, "No, I can handle it." (he paused)

Ms. Murdoch asked, "What are you thinking?" "I was thinking about where

the water should go?" Caden said. Ms. Murdoch then asked him, "Do you think a bird can get their head in there?" (he paused again) Ms. Murdoch asks him, "Why don't you try it? Pretend you are the bird."

Caden leaned forward toward the feeder. (he paused)

Mrs. Murdoch asked Caden, "What do you know about water?" (he paused) "It's liquid. It makes you strong. Do you think it should go here? He points to the water cup.

Ms. Murdoch tells him, "All living things need water. Do you want to get some water? Would that help you think about it?"

Caden filled the cup with water and carried it very carefully to where he was working.

Ms. M. "How could you make it (the cup) steady?"

Caden and Ms. Murdoch talked more about where the water could be placed on the feeder. It was almost clean up time. Ms. Murdoch suggested putting the water cup on the top of the feeder inside a wide flat lid. It would have been an easy place to put the water cup except for the cellophane tape that ran across it to hold the lid in place. She suggested snipping the tape and repositioning it flat against the sides of

the lid so that the water cup could sit inside it. Caden really wanted to come up with his own solution, though. He held the cup in other



positions. Ms. Murdoch told Caden it was great to come up with his own solution. After a few minutes Caden suggested "snipping" the tape so that the cup could sit inside the lid. Ms. Murdoch helped flatten that tape after Caden had snipped it. He sat the water cup in place.

"I think you should put some real seed it the feeder," Ms. Murdoch said. Caden wanted to but we weren't able to do that until an hour and a half later. Caden was with his afternoon group. Ms. Murdoch went to Caden and offered to go with him to fill the feeder and place it outdoors. Five of Caden's classmates went along to watch the process. Caden thought about where to put the feeder.

Ms. Murdoch asked, "Where do you know birds like to go around here?"

## Toddler A news

by Kathy Marshall and Joy Ritchie

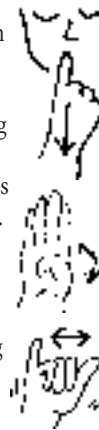
Our small group focus for the first two weeks has been learning the word and sign for red, yellow and blue. Children have been building with red blocks, and hiding yellow ducks in yellow boxes and blue bears in red boxes.

We sing alot in the classrooms, too. "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" is a favorite and we are learning each others names by singing "Hickety-Tickety Bumblebee." We use the song, "Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush" to review our daily routine. Our "Friends" song is a nice way to close our time together.

The Nature Explore Classroom is a wonderful space to run, jump, laugh and explore every day that the weather allows. Remember parents, we go outside every day unless it is too wet or very cold. Please send warm coats, mittens, hats, and closed-toe shoes with your child when the weather is cooler and/or damper. The children enjoy digging in the sand and looking for worms. They use tree blocks and rocks to create tumbling towers and they have observed how the tilt of the table affects the stability of their towers. A monarch butterfly has been sharing our room with us, too. We watched it emerge from its chrysalis and fly around the room!

### Parents:

Please mark every item you send with your child. This includes lunch items (spoons, sippy cups, dishes, food containers, etc.) or clothing (coats, hats, mittens, boots, etc.). With different teachers helping during lunch and during afternoon activities it is easy to misplace articles of clothing or lunches in the wrong cubbie or lunch bag. Your help in identifying your child's belongings is greatly appreciated.



Top to bottom:  
red, yellow,  
blue



Where could you put it that it would sit steadily?" A classmate suggested "In the shade." Another said "In a tree." Caden chose to put the feeder on top of a 5' brick wall. Ms. Murdoch lifted him to place it there and everyone stood back to see it there.



## Nature Explore Family Club News

by Chris Kiewra, Family Programs Coordinator

Many families spent a beautiful fall morning in early September exploring with their senses at the Pioneers Park Nature Center. Children led their parents through the herb garden as they used their noses to try to detect a scent they recognized. They used their eyes to look closely to match colors in the plants to something they were wearing and paint color sample cards. (This would be an easy activity to try on a neighborhood walk as well).

Frogs were discovered in the pond, tall prairie grass was trudged through, and the Natural Play Space was thoroughly enjoyed! It was especially fun to discover elements such as a nature art table and building area like we have in our own Nature Explore Classroom at Dimensions! Spending time outdoors together exploring and getting to know each other a little better are what the Families' Club is all about. Please join us for the next Nature Explore Families' Club at Spring Creek Prairie (near Denton) from 10:30-Noon on October 11th!

(photos by Chris Kiewra)



## Why Go Outside? Parent Workshop

by Chris Kiewra, Family Programs Coordinator

"I never realized how big the outdoor classroom was!" said a mother who explored the path weaving around the space.

Another parent who has been consistently surprised her son was not in the garden when she comes to pick him up said, "I see now why my son loves the sandbox so much, you feel surrounded by nature when you are sitting down in there!"

"I was overwhelmed by the feeling that the whole space is so loved, planned out, and cared for! The space just gives you that feeling of nurturing!" said a mother new to the program this fall.

These were just some of the comments from parents who attended the recent parent workshop on the integral aspect

daily time outdoors plays in children's overall development. Discussions about why children today are disconnected from nature, as well as reasons to and ideas for reconnecting the two, took place. Parents were reminded that play is important for all of us no matter what our age is and that it is truly how children learn best. Closely observing a natural treasure to rekindle that sense of wonder that nature so keenly sparks and creating nature art were two more opportunities parents had to see how their children learn through play and investigation of nature's "loose parts" such as seed pods and flower petals. If you would like to learn more about our outdoor classroom or the benefits of consistent time outdoors, ask your child's teacher or email Chris Kiewra at [chrisk@dimensionsfoundation.org](mailto:chrisk@dimensionsfoundation.org).

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](http://www.dimensionsfoundation.org)