

## ***The Dimensions Foundation's Collaborative Work With Nature Education***

### ***Executive Director's Message*** *by Nancy Rosenow*

During the week of October 15 – 21, 2006 over 350 people from 25 nations participated in the Working Forum on Nature Education for Young Children, a World Forum Foundation project organized in collaboration with Dimensions Educational Research Foundation, The National Arbor Day Foundation, and Child Educational Center, Caltech. The Forum was held at Lied Lodge and Conference Center in Nebraska City, and has led to the Dimensions Foundation's participation in a world-wide group called the Nature Action Collaborative for Children (NACC). We are also working closely with the Nebraska Early Childhood Training Center, the Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children on a number of initiatives around our state that encourage schools and other early childhood programs to bring more connections with nature into children's days.

Here is just a sampling of what we are doing:

***We are working closely with a project to develop a total of twenty pilot and demonstration Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom sites around the state.*** Each site will receive a visit from a Dimensions Foundation team (composed of a landscape architect and an educator)

that will help develop a concept plan for the outdoor space. Site visits in the Omaha area have been held, and more will be occurring soon in other parts of the state. We are also involved in similar visits to other sites throughout the country (including Missouri, Minnesota, California and New York) to help develop other Nature Explore Classrooms. Sites will receive a copy of the book, **Learning With Nature**, to aid in their collaborative design work. This book is a collaborative project of Dimensions and The National Arbor Day Foundation, and will be available by February 15, 2007.

***We are holding a Train-the-Trainers project so that new Dimensions trainers will be able to present more nature education workshops.*** The first session will be held on February 17, and will be completed by June 9, 2007.

***We are hosting a workshop for landscape architects and architects that will help them learn the field-tested principles for designing Nature Explore classrooms.*** The first in a series of these types of workshops will be held on April 10 and 11, 2007. As part of the workshop process, the group will provide a concept plan for a Head Start Program in the Nebraska City area. More of these kinds of workshops will be held soon in other parts of the country.

All of the work we do around the state and around the country

reinforces the daily work that happens in our own Early Education Programs classrooms. We see the wonderful connections children are making with nature on a daily basis, and we see so much eagerness to learn being facilitated. Children can learn in such a complete way when they have daily opportunities in nature to explore, experiment, draw, sketch, build, move, create music, write, look up information in books, and participate in real work (like weeding a garden or feeding birds in winter). We are pleased to be able to share the research and field-testing occurring each day in our classrooms with other children around the country.

### ***Our Registration Process***

Registration forms for the 2007-2008 school year will be in children's cubbies February 15 and 16. Be sure to turn your forms in right away before they go out to the general public. This will help to ensure that you receive your choice of session(s).

Registration for our Summer Programs will go out in cubbies on March 20 and 21. These are the dates and themes for our summer sessions:

***About the Artist... June 11-15***

***From the Greenhouse to the Garden... June 18-22***

***Art Adventures... June 25-29***

***Let's Celebrate!... (closed July 4th) July 2-6***

***Imagine That!... July 9-13***

***Dream It, Construct It, Create It!... July 16-20***

***Nature Explore... July 23-27***

***Games Galore... August 6-10***

# ***“Stories of Home” generates children’s self-exploration***

by Tina Reeble

music and movement coordinator

This is the first article in a series inspired by our exploration of “Stories of Home. It is meant to help us all understand the value of the process that we take to seek information, gain deeper understanding and allow for creative self-expression through project work.

The Dimensions classrooms are buzzing with excitement as the children and teachers share about themselves and learn to appreciate the unique qualities that each person has.

Cami Burchett began by reading books about families to her group. While reading the story, *Me and My Family Tree* by Joan Sweeney, the group learned about family trees. Mrs. Burchett shared part of her story of home by showing the children the story of the birth of her first child, Brianna. Recorded in scrapbook form, the children heard stories about Brianna’s first year and looked at her family tree. They discovered that Brianna’s aunt and uncle were Mrs. Burchett’s sister and brother! The children are now excited to bring in pictures that tell their own life stories.

Joyce White and her student teacher Katie Sharp asked the children to make rubbings of their shoes and tell stories about the places their shoes take them. They too have used several books to help children express what they know. *The Family Book* by Todd Parr helped the children begin a discussion about family members and feelings, which led to some exploration with recycled materials

to help the children illustrate how their face would look when they had different kinds of feelings.

As the group began to explore sculpture they asked each other what is the difference between a pretend story and a real story. They also used their own bodies to make statues. After reading the book, *Stranger in the Woods* by Carl R. Sams II and Jean Stoick, Atticus became the snowman and the other children in his group used their bodies to become the animals living in the forest. (Pretend)

Josh has had an opportunity to bring some artifacts from his home that helped him tell about his connection to his grandpa who lives on a farm. (Real)

Suzan Haley has started to share stories that her daughter Brooke wrote in journals when she was young. Mrs. Haley brought a family photograph and shared a journal entry that the children particularly enjoyed about a time when Brooke found a nest on the deck of her house that was empty and over the course of the summer she discovered eggs that eventually hatched into baby birds.

Mrs. Haley has also shared stories of her own childhood adventures, entertaining the children with a tale about herself and her brother being up in a tree as a child walked down the sidewalk underneath them with a snake in his hand. When Mrs. Haley found out the snake was for sale she scrambled down the tree and ran inside to get her money. She became the proud owner of that snake for the rest of the summer!

This has inspired the children in her group to bring pictures from

home and begin their own journaling that they are working on at school. During this process Cory noted that there are all kinds of families. “Mine is small,” he stated proudly, “it’s just me and my mom.”

Chris Kiewra has started a documentation board showing all the ways children tell stories. The children have used big body movement to dance a story that they already know. They have used writing tools to sketch a story that they have learned through song. Several children painted a story that they listened to about little blue and little yellow (same title by Leo Lionni) and then added dictation. Most recently, Mrs. Kiewra has added a section that depicts story through play. The children used counting bears and boxes to build homes for the bear families and of course the bears had stories to share as the children’s imaginations went to work!

Stay tuned for more stories as we continue to work and learn in the coming weeks.

## **School Closed**

Remember that we will be closed February 19 for President’s Day. Watch the newsletter for reminders on future dates when we will not be in session.

## **LPS Early Dismissal**

LPS will be dismissing early on February 27, March 27, and April 24. Our drivers will be picking kindergarten children up early on those days.

# Thoughts and Dates for Parents

## Valentine's Day Fun Reminder

Your child is invited to bring valentines for friends on Valentine's Day (we'll celebrate Feb. 13 and 14)! Here are some numbers to help you to determine amounts if you choose to send Valentine's.

- Preschool...22 (+2 teachers)
- Kindergarten...35 (+2 teachers) OR (your child's class only)...16 (+2 teachers)
- Toddler A (everyone)...20 (+2 teachers) OR (your child's class only)...12 (+2 teachers)
- Toddler B (everyone)...18 (+2 teachers) OR (your child's class only)...12 (+2 teachers)

Generosity and caring about the feelings of others doesn't always come naturally. Many children learn these traits over time through play and holiday traditions, which is why Valentine's Day is so great. With all the greeting cards and classroom activities, it's easy to teach your child the value of sharing, giving and compassion.

## Family Night February 23

Mark your calendars for February 23. (A reservation form is included in this newsletter if you haven't sent your's in yet.)

If you would enjoy creating your own basket for our Family Night basket auction, fill out one of the

forms in the hallway and put them in the black payment box. This will let Heather Guess know how many baskets to plan for. Thank you!!

## Weather Reminder:

Please remember that if Lincoln Public Schools close for weather-related reason, we will be closed as well. If LPS happen to be closed on February 23...Family Night...we **WILL POSTPONE FAMILY NIGHT** to another time.

## Open House

Children are excited to invite you to attend Open House on March 1. They would love to have the chance to show you their classrooms and the recent activities they've enjoyed, take you to our greenhouse, and introduce you to friends and teachers.

## Parent-Teacher Conferences are Coming on March 21 and 22

Be sure to sign up for a conference with your child's teacher when the sign-up sheets go up on February 20th and 21st. We love having the chance to fill you in on all the wonderful learning your child is experiencing, and we love hearing more about your child's experiences at home.

# Preschool Class Experiences

*submitted by Mrs. Holmes, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Van Laningham*

We owe a big thank you to Barry Schwab, Dorie's dad, for bringing his firefighter's equipment & fire truck to school in December. The children were so excited to see his gear and they actually got to squirt the hose from the truck while it was parked in the lot. They learned more than "stop, drop and roll" ... Mr. Schwab explained to children the best place to be if they are trapped in their room and cannot get out of a window or door (because of fire) is

to sit by the wall that is next to the front or back door. Firefighters do a sweep of the perimeter when they look for people. We hope you have a family plan for fire. It's vital to have a place to meet outside of your home so you know that everyone is safe.

*submitted by Mrs. Tichota*

Has your child been talking about the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Eiffel Tower, and the Chrysler Building? These are the replica buildings found in the Dimensions Tower Building Box Kit we've been using during

## Dimensions Nature Club

*by Chris Kiewra, Teacher*

*"Many children today find it easier to stay indoors and watch television. I worry that children do not know what they are missing. Children cannot love what they do not know. They cannot miss what they have not experienced."*

Mary Pipher, *The Shelter of Each Other*

Do you want your children to spend more time outdoors but need more ideas for fun places to go and interesting things to do? Join the Dimensions Nature Club!

Our first meeting was in January on a beautiful winter morning. We looked for signs of winter during a fun scavenger hunt. Children discovered animal homes, different smells, berries, and buds. We closely observed a tree and used many of our senses to find out interesting things! Most importantly, we all had a good time playing together outside!

We would love to have your family join us at our next meeting!

## Dimensions Nature Club

February 17, 2007

Pioneers Park Nature Center

10:30AM-NOON

R/VP to Dimensions Office or email  
ckiewra@neb.rr.com

## Donation Requests

### Preschool & Kindergarten

- ⊙ Red & Pink Construction Paper
- ⊙ Kleenex
- ⊙ Small Dust Pan & Broom
- ⊙ Gallon Bottle of Elmer's Glue
- ⊙ Masking Tape
- ⊙ Plastic Spoons & Forks

### Infant & Toddler

- ⊙ Red & Pink Construction Paper
- ⊙ Small Dust Pan & Broom
- ⊙ Kleenex
- ⊙ Dish Soap
- ⊙ Glue Sticks

## Staff Birthdays

Amy Jensen.....Feb. 1

## Thanks To...

Barry Schwab for bringing his firefighter's equipment & fire truck to school in December.

Macaroni Grill for another incredible lunch in January.

## To Learn More...

Visit [www.artscene.org](http://www.artscene.org) and click on the "Stories of Home" link to learn more about the public arts project "celebrating that which brings us together – family – and that which sets us apart the diversity within our human community."

## Mark Your Calendars... Upcoming Events & Important Dates!

### Monday, February 19

No School (President's Day)

### Friday, February 23

Annual Family Night (Children's Activities, Spaghetti Dinner & Basket Auction)

We've been having fun collecting items to use in making our themed baskets for the silent auction! Our auction will have both the baskets that appeal to all ages, as well as items that are geared just to adults.

Inserted in this newsletter is another flyer with the dinner reservation form. If you haven't already turned yours in and are planning on attending, you can still turn in the form in the Black payment boxes or in either office.

### Thursday, March 1

Open House

### March 12-13

No School (Spring Break)

### Friday, March 30

Community-Wide Family Event featuring Jazz-A-Ma-Tazz with Hayes Greenfield and his ensemble from New York City (note date change)



## Events Held at First-Plymouth Church Open to the whole community!

### Sunday, February 11, 4PM

Abendmusik: Imani Winds, The woodwind quintet brings together elements of classical, African, South American and jazz harmonies. Every family will receive a FREE child's ticket with purchase. \$20 / \$17 senior citizens / \$10 students, 2000 D Street, (402) 476-9933

**NOTE...** We will **NOT** follow Lincoln Public School's Calendar, but most vacation days and **ALL EMERGENCY weather closings of LPS** announced on the radio will be observed by our program. If LPS is not in session we will follow the Catholic School weather closing announcements.