

# The Courtyard Chronicle

January 2011



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**Creating a Village  
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# Bring the Learning Experience Home

The Children's Courtyard™ is committed to providing an enriching learning experience to every child in our care. But we also know how important it is for families to incorporate educational activities into their home as well. Here are some great things to do with children of all ages!

## Infants

The next time you give your child a bath try this fun activity. Fill a spray bottle with warm water and set it to the mist setting. Spray your child gently on different body parts with the misty water. Does she seem to like it? Change the setting to another one and spray your child on different body parts. Which does she like best?

## Young Toddlers

Find some empty containers around your house like a laundry basket, a shoe box, large pots or bowls. Bring out some of your child's stuffed animals and encourage them to give a ride to their toy. Choose an animal and a container and follow them in their travels.

## Older Toddlers

The next time you receive junk mail at your house, don't throw it away; let your child have fun tearing it into pieces for you instead. Place a box or recyclable container next to them and let them rip into it. What a great way to shred your unwanted mail. When your child is finished, simply throw the container away.

## Preschoolers

Place some of your child's favorite toys in front of you. Ask your child different questions about the toys such as, "Can you find the biggest toy? Guess which toy you think is the heaviest. Which toy is the most recent one you received? Pick out the toy that has the most blue in it. Which toy is the loudest or quietest?" Have fun coming up with different ways of describing the toys.

## School-Agers

You will need two pieces of paper and a pencil. Write the word Spring on one piece of paper and Winter on the other piece of paper. Ask your child to think about things common to each of the seasons. Some ideas could be the weather outside where you live, certain activities you do in the spring or winter, clothing you wear, foods you eat, or any holidays or special occasions. Write down the different ideas your child comes up with.

# It Takes a Village to Raise a Child

Dear Families,

I'm sure you've heard the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." It is our honor to serve you and your family and we are proud to be your "village" ... partnering with you in the care and education of your child.

We hope that every time your family enters our school, you are greeted warmly and made to feel welcome. This is a place where, to quote an older and more contemporary television theme song lyric, "Everybody knows your name."

However, we invite you to share more than your name. The threads of your child's classroom community are woven stronger when you share your cultures, family traditions, passions, histories and stories.

If you have not already, we encourage you to get to know your child's teachers and the other children and families around you. Consider networking with other parents to form carpool groups, barter services or swap recipes. Share your child-rearing experiences and advice with each other. Remember – you are surrounded by many other parents who may feel just as appreciative when you reach out.

On our end, we are committed to communicating openly and keeping you informed of current events at school. We love sharing the details with you of your child's day at our school. And we hope you feel equally comfortable sharing with us current events going on at home.

Communication and trust build a strong foundation with our school and our families. Being able to count on a "village" to help us through life's challenges eases the burden sometimes.

Remember, the invitation to create and join together as a school community is there each and every day. It is up to you and your teachers to accept that invitation, to come together to serve your children and to support each other through life's daily joys and sorrows.

Respectfully,  
The Education Team

# Top Parent Resolutions for the New Year

With a new year upon us, people around the world are thinking about their resolutions for 2011. If you're a parent, you want to be sure that you are doing everything possible to ensure your child's success academically, socially, developmentally and emotionally.

We are pleased to offer some of the top resolutions for parents in 2011.

- 1. I will give my child the gift of literacy.** Experts agree, the most important thing you can do to help your child is read to him/her every day. Treasure these moments of togetherness and share in their excitement over a favorite book. Not only will you create memories, you will help your child develop the foundation for a love of reading.
- 2. I will help my family eat healthier.** Suggestions include incorporating fruits and vegetables into daily meals. Have healthy snacks on hand at all times. Serve lean meats and other sources of protein. Suggest water over sugary beverages and try and keep fast food trips to a minimum. And remember, the best way to encourage healthy eating in your family is to be a great role model.
- 3. I will prioritize family time.** Sitting around a table and eating together as a family has many benefits. Taking time to connect and share a meal helps create a strong family unit. Add in a weekly (or even monthly) game or movie night, and suddenly your family and the time you spend together is a priority for everyone.
- 4. We will go green.** You don't have to go extreme to make a difference. There are small things your family can do every day to help the environment. Teach your children how to recycle. Turn off lights when you leave a room or turn off water while brushing your teeth. Consider buying fresh, organic produce. Save used paper for scrap paper. Each will go a long way in preserving our planet for future generations.
- 5. I will help my family give back.** Giving back can take many forms, including donating recyclables to a can drive, boxing up toys and used clothes for a resale shop, giving a donation of time and/or money to a worthy cause of your child's choice. Discuss different ways with your family that you can make a difference.
- 6. I will create a sense of community for my child.** It's important to become a member of your child's school community. Children feel more confident and comfortable in school when they feel their families are

part of the experience. Chaperone a class field trip. Share a special interest or talent with the class. Donate objects from home to the classroom. Volunteer whenever possible. Whatever you choose to do, you can feel good knowing that your child will benefit in the long run.

- 7. Celebrate the successes.** Whether it's a great report card, a dance recital, an awesome art project or even just a great job on chores, take an opportunity to praise your child. Maybe have a special dinner, let them pick the movie on family night or even frame their accomplishment and hang it on a designated wall. Remember, taking the time to acknowledge these successes with your child means more than how you actually celebrate them.
- 8. I will make safety a priority.** Every minute, 17 kids are seen in emergency rooms with unintentional injuries – that's 9.2 million a year.\* Take time in 2011 to safety-proof your home. Install safety latches on cabinets and drawers. Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove. Use safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs. Unplug hair dryers. Create a fire evacuation plan. Each small action you take will help make your home safer for you and your family.

If you have great parenting resolutions of your own, we would love to hear them. Please visit our Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/ChildrensCourtyard> to share your suggestions. Here is to a happy 2011!

\*Source: CDC Childhood Injury Report (2000-2006)

## 2010 Child Care Tax Credit

Did you know that you may be eligible to receive as much as \$2,100 in savings through the federal Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit? For every dollar that you spend on child care, you can save some money on this year's tax bill. All you have to do is fill out IRS Form 2441, which you can download here: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f2441.pdf>

If you would like to respond to anything you read, have parenting questions or child development topics that you'd like to see explored in future issues of the monthly newsletter, please e-mail us at [educationteam@learningcaregroup.com](mailto:educationteam@learningcaregroup.com). We would love to hear from you.

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