

South Hills Child Development Center Inc. February 2012 Newsletter

Important Dates to Note on Your Calendar:

- Friday, Feb. 3** **MDA Hop A Thon donations are due by 5:30**
- Monday, Feb.6** **American Cancer Society Daffodil Days begin**
- Tuesday, Feb. 7** **Staff meeting 5:30-7:30**
- Mon and Tues
Feb. 13 and 14** **Valentine's Day parties**
- Friday, Feb. 17** **Daffodil Orders for American Cancer Society are due by 5:30**
- Monday, Feb. 20** **Millcreek Inservice/Presidents Day-our school age students will join us**
- Thursday, Feb. 23**
- Friday, Feb. 24** **Portfolio Viewing for all classes**
-
-

Hop-A-Thon for MDA

The children enjoyed an excellent presentation in January by MDA regarding muscular dystrophy, disabilities, and how young children can help! They all had the opportunity to 'try out' a child sized wheelchair, and found it rather difficult to maneuver!

When the day of the Hop-A-Thon arrived, the children were most enthusiastic to participate, and amazed us all with the number of hops they were able to perform in one minute! At this time, we have not yet compiled all of the hops and monies, but please watch for the results to be posted in the foyer! We are so proud of our children, who consistently place first among all the schools participating in western Pennsylvania! (Not *just* Northwestern PA!).

From Connie: This event is dedicated to the memory of two children for whom I cared throughout my teen years, Stephen and Linda, and also for one of our special alumni, Nick, who also passed away a few years ago due to this disease. This event is so dear to

my heart, and I thank you, parents, for your incredible generosity. The day may soon come when a cure for this disabling disease is found, due to your family's efforts!

Snacks

Thank you so much, parents, for the nutritious snacks you have provided to our students! Favorite snacks this month included Clementine tangerines (a \$5.99 box was plenty for all the classes!) along with whole grain crackers, vanilla yogurt with fresh berries, celery with cream cheese and raisins, apples and cheese, bananas and Cheerios. These snacks met all of the criteria required of us: no or low sugar, fresh fruit or vegetables, no peanut contamination, and all items were posted on the snack notice we send parents which contains all snacks that we can accept. **We strongly encourage the addition of a fruit or vegetable with daily snacks. Please remember that fruits and vegetables can only be served if they are precut in packages at the store or processing factory; otherwise, please send them whole (a bag of apples, box of tangerines, bunch of bananas, stalks of celery, etc.) and the staff will cut them prior to serving. Some grocery stores are now selling "Kid apples", very small apples specially marked for fitting into children's hands. The children love these!**

Also, keep in mind that the snack notice parents receive clearly states that only one gallon of drink (100% fruit juice, milk, or water) is required for snack. Often children drink water regardless of what is offered. If you are choosing water for the snack you are providing, we have a Brita pitcher to serve the children; **you do NOT have to purchase bottled water.**

Please do not be upset with us for returning snacks that are not listed on the snack list, or that are noted on the state guidelines as not permitted to serve (Grapes, carrots, popcorn, hard pretzels, juices that are not 100% fruit juice are not permitted to be served under any circumstances according to the regulations). Expressing anger toward us cannot intimidate us into non-compliance with required policies and is counter-productive. We simply cannot compromise our license by serving foods that are not permitted. If parents simply select something on the list of permitted snacks, and then check for peanut-free ingredients, then the required criteria will be met. When we are forced to return a snack to you, it is simply because we must follow the state and national requirements. **Please** do not take it personally. We love you all! We check snacks before opening, so that you can return it for a refund if we cannot use it.

We are grateful for all of your efforts in providing healthy snacks and promoting good eating choices among our students, as we strive to always comply with the required regulations.

Daffodil Days

Each year, South Hills agrees to participate in the American Cancer Society's Daffodil Days, one of their major fundraisers. For many years, "Ms. Sue" Sedgwick, South Hills' Assistant Director for 29 years, served as the coordinator for this event, before she passed away in 2005 after a long battle with breast cancer. In 2008, we shared in "Jack's Battle"

as one of our students, Jack Sundberg, died of brain cancer in June of that year. And more recently, 11 year old Nicholas Pagano, a South Hills alumni, also passed away due to cancer. Currently, our own Avery is being closely observed due to her own cancer bout.

This year, Ms. Beth will serve as the coordinator for the Daffodil Days event, and we hope our parents will assist in making a contribution to the American Cancer Society. Order forms with all the necessary instructions for ordering will be in your child's take-home folder. Please return all orders no later than Friday, February 17th.

Portfolio Viewing

All parents are invited to attend Portfolio Viewing Days on Thursday and Friday, February 23 and 24. Please plan to arrive ½ hour earlier than normal to have time to join your child and share his/her work as documented in his/her portfolio, keeping in mind that the school closes at 5:30. Half day preschool parents will be asked to arrive at 11:00/2:30 instead of 11:30/3:10.

This body of work represents untold hours of observation and documentation by your child's teachers, as well as others on the team. This is in addition to the day to day lessons and tasks that our staff performs on behalf of your child. South Hills is the only area program to offer this type of portfolio assessment which thoroughly tracks a child's development and provides us with valuable information so that we can design the best possible educational program for your child. We hope you enjoy and appreciate the staff's efforts and that the portfolio is meaningful for you. You will have the opportunity to share your thoughts regarding it with us, via the Parent Response Sheet, which the Department of Education now requires. (We have already been requiring this feedback for many years.) This response is helpful as we continually set our goals for improvement, and the Department of Education requires it as documentation that parents have been kept informed of their child's educational progress.

Valentine's Day Parties

You will soon receive details regarding the Valentine's Day parties. Since we are not permitted to give out a class list of children's names, **please do not have your child address valentines to specific children.** Children should be encouraged to sign their own names to the valentines, however. (You may want to start now and do one or two each day so this is not an overwhelming task!). Parents: Don't forget to have the Zaner-Bloser writing model close by! It is found on our Parent Link on the home page.

Please remember no candy or other food or gift treats can be distributed with valentines due to regulations/standards. Please don't be dismayed by this; the children greatly enjoy our festivities as we emphasize special times shared together rather than candy, gifts, etc.

As always, we welcome all families to our festivities!

Registration for Summer and Fall/School-Age Program

If you have not already returned your financial agreement for the summer and fall terms, please do so **immediately** so your placement at South Hills is not jeopardized. Our waiting list is extremely lengthy, and we are working diligently on completing the registration and scheduling for summer and fall of 2012.

If you, or someone you know, is in need of a summer program for their school-age child, please consider South Hills! Children can attend our Summer Educational Camp until they begin 6th grade. The students are engaged in two-four week units of study that are enjoyable and educational! This year the children will be participating in units on nature based play/nature art and biographies of some important but often unknown people who serve as an inspiration for us all! We still have a few openings, and would be happy to discuss the program in more detail. Stop by to see Connie for more information!

Before/After School Program

South Hills also offers a before and after school program for students who attend Grandview Elementary School. This program is less expensive than the program at Grandview, and includes care on in-service or school vacation days, as well as care during delayed start days due to weather. Enrollment is required through South Hills and also the Millcreek School Transportation Department. Connie can provide the forms and any other details.

We provide the children with homework help, snack, physical activities, art and craft projects, games, and other age-appropriate activities.

Parents can also use our services for their child on any inservice and school vacation days when Millcreek Schools are not in session, regardless of what school they attend. Reservations can be arranged through Beth.

Supporting Your Child's Independence

Please assist us as we teach your children the essential self-help skills to meet the benchmarks of the educational standards that are appropriate for your child's age. Many children are still being carried into the school; parents are taking off their child's coat for them, putting their items in their cubbies, and even washing their child's hands for them. We work hard to teach self-help skills, and ask that you assist by encouraging your child to walk into and out of the classroom (We do understand that many children are carried inside the door due to weather/decision to forego boots but they could independently walk down the hall and into the classroom), place some items in his/her cubby, and wash independently.

We are also presenting some role playing lessons to encourage the children to greet their teachers in the morning, rather than deferring to parents who respond. Please consider role playing at home too! (For example, "Pretend I am Ms. Connie and I am saying Good Morning to you! What could you say back? Let's act it out!")

It is hard to 'let go', and we do understand (many of us are mothers too!), but this independence is important, and your support is important for your child's self help skills. Thanks!

Spring Fundraisers

We are in the process of finalizing our spring fundraisers. There will be several offered; please remember that we do not expect parents to participate but hope we offer enough variety that at least one of them will be appealing. Currently we are considering our annual seed/plant fundraiser, Pulakos holiday candy, and *Equal Exchange and Ten Thousand Villages*—they offer organic, fair trade coffees, teas, chocolate, and items created by third world artisans. Please watch your child's take home folder for details.

In addition, don't forget Lovable Labels, our ongoing fundraiser that you can share with all of your friends and coworkers selling high quality iron on labels for children's clothing; stickers for children's lunchboxes, games, books and other hard items, and stickers for children with allergies. Many of these stickers can be used by adults as well.

What Have the South Hills' Teachers Been Doing?

Pam, Robin, and Mary will take a class on Feb. 4 and 11 through Penn State at the Erie Art Museum. It is titled "Experiencing Tunes, Tales, and Traditions" and will utilize the gifted refugee women relocated into our area. A description: "For hundreds of years, lullabies, counting songs and finger plays have calmed and cheered little ones. Music teaches motor and social skills, language development and cultural pride. In the classroom they brighten the mood, focus energy, and celebrate culture. Participants will learn easy and adaptable songs, child friend food, art and movement activities from women from Congo, Iraq and Bhutan, sharing in Erie's wealth..."

Pam is continuing an Advanced Conversation Spanish class every Tuesday evening at McDowell High School.

Artist in Residence Program

Each year, our full day preschool and Kindergarten students enjoy a bit of a winter reprieve as we arrange for an Artist-in-Residence to share a week with us. This effort is coordinated through the Arts Council of Erie, and typically takes place in March. We are currently working with the Arts Council to arrange for a dancer to serve as this year's artist, so will keep you posted regarding this special event!

Sneaker Requirement

The children continue to participate in rigorous physical activities in the classroom on a daily basis through ABL (Action Based Learning). It is REQUIRED that the children wear sneakers to school daily, or they are severely limited in their participation. A child with boots/shoeboots/dress shoes cannot participate on the balance beam, river rocks,

balancing cones, etc. PLEASE send your children in sneakers EVERY DAY as requested in our requirements.

Outdoor Clothing

We take the children outside every day, morning and afternoon, if the temperature is 40 degrees or higher. This is a regulation. If your child is not appropriately dressed, South Hills is required to provide coats, hats, mittens, and even boots. This is becoming extremely burdensome since we have had so many warm January days of outdoor play. We simply cannot store enough clothing for the number of children who do not have appropriate clothing. PLEASE dress your child daily with the expectation they will be going outdoors. This would save us much time and effort as we attempt to locate the correct sizes of clothing, boots, mittens, hats, etc.

If your child has worn our clothing, PLEASE return them to us. Our supply is severely depleted by families who do not return what has been used. (You will recognize it by the large SH written with permanent marker on the clothing...). Your assistance would be greatly appreciated.

Changes in Emergency Contact Information

It is essential to contact Beth or Connie immediately if there are any changes in your emergency contact information so your child's file can be updated. Keeping us updated is for the health and safety of your child. If your child is ill or hurt, we need to reach you as quickly as possible. Your continual communication with us regarding new or changed phone numbers, extensions, work place, etc. can make a **huge** difference as we attempt to reach you in an emergency. PLEASE don't forget us when you have phone number and/or work/home address changes. Also, if there are changes among those people you have listed giving permission for us to contact in an emergency, we need those changes as well. Your assistance allows us to provide the best possible plan in case your child needs you!

From Connie

As South Hills begins its 38th year, I am overwhelmed by the waiting list this year! It speaks volumes to me of your support as you tell others of your child's positive experiences here at South Hills. I have rarely advertised, relying solely on word-of-mouth advertising, and your positive comments mean so much to me. I am only sorry that the school is not large enough to accommodate all the wonderful parents I have talked with who have added their children to our waiting list. Registration is nearly completed for the summer and fall, but please don't be discouraged if you have friends who did not receive letters of registration! Changes often take place before the school year begins, and I do not take anyone off the list unless it is requested. I am ever the optimist!

I hope you will all spend some time at the school during Portfolio Viewing Days—your child and his/her teacher look forward to sharing in the excitement of your child's development over the past few months. The teachers have been working incredibly hard

on these assessments; I know you will appreciate their dedication and energy on behalf of your child.

Thank you so much for your patience during sloppy winter days when the blue shoe covers must be put on in crowded hallways. I have only had a few parental complaints regarding them, and have had most parents brushing off my apologies with much humor and smiles! (**Greatly appreciated!**). I look forward to spring, along with you! The daylight is already increasing, a hopeful sign!

In the meantime, my staff and I anticipate sharing Valentine's Day with your child, and seeing the classrooms explode with hearts and expressions of love. May you enjoy your celebration with your child!

♥ Connie