



## THE SOUTH SHORE NATURAL SCIENCE CENTER

December  
2019



### Nature Center Preschool News

December is here and also the time to register for **Fall of 2020 for current NCP families!** Registration materials will be available in each classroom. If you do not receive one, or would like to have a registration for a sibling, please contact Diane by email [dthureson@ssymca.org](mailto:dthureson@ssymca.org) or in person! Please note that your fall 2019 registration is good for the 2019-2020 school year and this new registration form is for September 2020! We give NCP families first choice in holding the spot of your choice since we will fill up fast once registration opens to the public in January. **Please return your registration form as soon as possible for best choice!**

**Registration for new families begins in early January! Families may contact Diane Thureson, Director, for more information and a tour to see a class in session, [dthureson@ssymca.org](mailto:dthureson@ssymca.org) 781-659-2559**

## Swim

*Don't forget that Nature Center Preschool has a swim playgroup opportunity at the Emilson YMCA. Each class has a day and time set aside so that friends can swim together with their caregivers.*

*Ask Diane for a registration form.*

NCP staff attends regular training throughout the school year. Recently, staff attended *Right to Rich and Sustained Inquiry, Right to Nature, and Emergent Curriculum and Making Learning Visible in Early Education Settings.*

## Did you know?

The *Jump for the Y!* fundraising appeal continues to be a great success! We still need your help to reach our goal of \$5000. We currently have a total of \$2590. You can continue to share our fundraising link on social media and through email to family and friends: [https://give.ssymca.org/jump\\_nature\\_centerpreschool](https://give.ssymca.org/jump_nature_centerpreschool) The link will be available until Dec 15<sup>th</sup>. Thank You!



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## Family Advisory Council News!

**Holiday Assistance Gift drive is posted in both classrooms. Please take a gift tag from the classroom display, sign your name on the corresponding line, and return wrapped gifts by December 13<sup>th</sup>!**

### Upcoming meeting dates:

Thurs., January 16<sup>th</sup> 6:30-7:30

Ladies Night Out committee phone call week of Jan. 6th

### Dates in December

**2<sup>nd</sup> Registration for Fall 2020 begins**

**13<sup>th</sup> Holiday Assistance gift donations due**

**23<sup>rd</sup> -Jan 2 Vacation week program**

**Jan 2<sup>nd</sup> school resumes**

### Birthday Books!

**For a donation of \$10 or more, your child will have a brand new book dedicated in his/her name to their classroom library. Contact [katiekunevich@gmail.com](mailto:katiekunevich@gmail.com)**



## Nature Notes

### Caches, Hoards and Stores

Wild animals have ways of taking care of themselves during the winter and one of the best ways for them to ensure that they have enough food is to store it in hidden places and dens.

- Wildcats and feral cats bury small prey, such as birds, covering them in loose vegetation.
- Moles cache worms in autumn and winter before the ground becomes frozen; earthworms are often found in 'knots'.
- Grey squirrels scatterhoard – nuts are buried in ones and twos in pits 2-5cm deep.
- Jays also scatterhoard acorns and beechmast, though often considerable distances from the nearest tree; squirrels scatterhoard close to trees.

Lunch Bunch is a wonderful extra social time for children. Children eat their lunch together, exchange ideas in conversation, and have additional cooperative play time. Lunch Bunch occurs on Wednesdays and Thursdays from about 12-1pm. Afternoon children may arrive at about 12:10 to allow for morning dismissal and morning children should be picked up at 12:50 so that the afternoon classes can transition to their regular class time. Ask your classroom teacher!

### Vacation Week--"Busy Builders"

Join us in our exploration of animal homes! How do animals build their homes? Why do some animals make nests while others build dens?

Teachers and children will work together to answer these questions and discover more about animal homes. Please dress appropriately for the weather.

**Monday, December 23<sup>th</sup> Spinning Spider Webs**

**Tuesday, December 24<sup>th</sup> Up in a Tree**

**Thursday, December 26<sup>th</sup> Burrows and Dens**

**Friday, December 27<sup>th</sup> Around One Log**

**Monday, December 30<sup>st</sup> Do Bugs Build?**

**Tuesday, December 31<sup>st</sup> Grass, Twigs, and Sticks**



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## How Learning to Put on Rain Boots Leads to Academic Success

Catherine Koons Hubbard

<https://naturalstart.org/feature-stories/how-learning-put-rain-boots-leads-academic-success>

It is easy to accept that a one-year-old baby is not yet able to dress herself unassisted, or to put on socks and shoes without help. Even people who do not spend their days working and playing with very young children understand that babies and toddlers follow a gradual progression in terms of motor development.

When discussing academics in early childhood, however, some policymakers and administrators often make the mistake of believing that earlier is better. They insist that early reading leads to greater success in the classroom, and they are eager to push so-called benchmark skills while ignoring the skills that ought to come first.

As nature preschool teachers, we often find ourselves in the middle of this conversation. Parents who enroll their children in our programs are, for the most part, in favor of outdoor exploration and play. At the same time, they want their children to enter kindergarten with all the necessary tools to succeed. For many parents, this means a focus on math and literacy.

Our own approach to school readiness, therefore, is not what they expect. We start by having children learn to put on their own rain boots.

We do not mean this in the metaphorical sense. We mean it quite literally. Managing rain boots – or socks, or even warm-weather sandals with straps - **are an important part of the kindergarten readiness process.**

Learning how to dress one's self falls into what occupational therapists call "Activities of Daily Living". ADL skills include self-feeding, toileting, and personal hygiene, such as blowing one's own nose. Those of us who teach in nature-based classrooms appreciate that learning to care for one's personal needs while also playing outdoors is not easy. In our program, which takes place in Wisconsin, there are coats, hats, and scarves to manage; there can be emergency bathroom needs; and then there's the challenge of blowing one's nose on a chilly day while wearing waterlogged mittens.

We understand that mastering ADL skills takes time and will vary based on individual needs. Nevertheless, we have seen that, as children gain confidence in caring for themselves, they also develop an increasing level of comfort and confidence in being in nature.

We place a great deal of value on self-efficacy at our nature preschool, that is, on children knowing that they have the skills they need to navigate new situations. Unlike self-esteem, which often depends on praise from others, self-efficacy develops when children have opportunities to discover their personal strengths. These will range from child to child. Some children discover an aptitude for balancing on logs and ice. Others develop empathy for animals. Still others are good at making friends, at playing cooperatively, or at solving problems. It is our hope that by the end of the year, they all feel confident in their ability to put on their own rain pants and boots.

Many children, especially those who have just turned three, are new to helping themselves. We do not advocate simply leaving them to figure it out unassisted. However, when parents ask, "But will they be prepared for school?" while simultaneously pulling socks onto feet and lifting feet into boots, we realize that we need to be better at sharing the importance of foundational skills.

Foundational skills in the preschool years include developing large and fine motor skills, developing self-regulation, learning to follow directions, and learning how to think through problems. Teaching a child to put on his own gear encompasses all of these.

As children learn to dress themselves, they are strengthening physical development, improving coordination and memory, and learning spatial and body awareness. Learning to manipulate one's own gear also serves the very practical purpose of freeing up parents' and teachers' time, while enabling children to fix any problems that may occur when playing outdoors, such as dislodging pebbles and sand from their boots or taking off mittens.



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