Greetings from the Child Care Project.

This month’s article (starting on page 18) reminds me that the days are getting longer and, sometimes, warmer. We are getting close to “Plant a Seed in a Cup Season”! In the coming weeks seeds will be sprouting in paper cups on the window sills of child care programs all around. What a great way to bring nature inside. Starting seeds and caring for plants can be a gratifying project and a great way to learn about growing things. Of course, some of us will forget to water the seeds and that too will be another good science lesson. But wait! Want to make that a GREAT science lesson? You can do a real experiment just like scientists do. You’ll use the scientific method and scientific language. As Principal Investigator you may direct the research as needed. Soon your junior scientists will be able to design and conduct their own experiments.

Every science experiment begins with a question. • In this case, it might be “What do plants need to grow?” You may consult library resources for background research. What do the children think? That’s their hypothesis. Conduct an experiment to test the hypothesis.

• Plant bean seeds in about 20 identical cups or pots. • Put them in a spot with good light and let the children help water them. • Observe daily, measure the growth and document the changes. • Record the children’s observations with words, drawings and photos.

• Let the plants grow until they are 3-4” high. • Keep half the plants in good light and water them as usual. This is your control group. • Divide the remaining into two experimental groups. • Label one group “no water.” Keep them in the sun and stop watering.

• Label one group “no light” and water as usual. Put the plants under a box that keeps the light out. Review the results and analyze your data. Encourage the children to draw their own conclusions based on the evidence. Was the hypothesis correct? • No? What’s your next hypothesis? • Yes? Do you have more questions? Now that’s science!

Happy experimenting,
8  Never Too Early, Part 1

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center- Aud.
F, Lebanon, NH • 6:30 - 8:30 pm • $15

This two-part training offered in collaboration with the Vermont Humanities Council offers an introduction to reading and sharing books and conversation with children. In this lively, interactive workshop, learn the importance and joy of sharing picture books and stories with infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Through hands-on exploration of children’s books, learn about early literacy and related developmental issues. Learn ways to create a literacy-rich environment, and share practical ideas with others. Discover ways to make books come alive through animated reading, rhymes and extension activities that encourage language development. Take home ideas you can put to use immediately in your program, along with a free set of gift books. Humor and laughter is the 2015-16 theme. Attendance at both sessions, March 8 and 10 is required. Presenter: Brenda Metzler, MA, Vermont Humanities Council literacy trainer

VT Core Knowledge Areas: 1, 3
NH Core Knowledge Areas: 3, 4
CDA Subject Areas: 2, 8

10  Never Too Early, Part 2

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center- Aud.
F, Lebanon, NH • 6:30 - 8:30 pm

See full description under March 8. Attendance at both sessions, March 8 and 10 is required. Presenter: Brenda Metzler, MA, Vermont Humanities Council literacy trainer

VT Core Knowledge Areas: 1, 3
NH Core Knowledge Areas: 3, 4
CDA Subject Areas: 2, 8


Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center- Aud.
E, Lebanon, NH • 6:00 - 9:00 pm • $30

This five-part, 15-hour mental health series is aligned with the teaching pyramid model for supporting social competence and preventing challenging behavior in young children. The research-based workshop modules build upon each other to create a strong foundation that supports all children. Based on training and tools provided by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations
for Early Learning (CSEFEL), Preschool Modules 1 and 2, topics to be addressed include strategies for preventing challenging behavior through building positive relationships with children, families and colleagues; designing environments, schedules and routines; implementing activities that promote child engagement; modifying and adapting materials and activities to meet individual needs of children; and providing encouragement and positive feedback. Effective strategies, ideas and resources to help will be discussed. Attendance on all five dates, March 17, 22, 24, 29 and 31 is required and outside work will be assigned. Presenter: Jan Crow, M.Ed.

VT Core Knowledge Areas: 1, 2, 3
NH Core Knowledge Areas: 2, 3, 4
CDA Subject Areas: 3, 4, 8

24 Promoting Social & Emotional Development, Part 3*

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center- Aud.
F, Lebanon, NH • 6:00 - 9:00 pm

See full description under March 17. Attendance on all five dates, March 17, 22, 24, 29 and 31 is required and outside work will be assigned. Presenter: Jan Crow, M.Ed.

VT Core Knowledge Areas: 1, 2, 3
NH Core Knowledge Areas: 2, 3, 4
CDA Subject Areas: 3, 4, 8

29 Promoting Social & Emotional Development, Part 4*

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center- Aud.
F, Lebanon, NH • 6:00 - 9:00 pm

See full description under March 17. Attendance on all five dates, March 17, 22, 24, 29 and 31 is required and outside work will be assigned. Presenter: Jan Crow, M.Ed.

VT Core Knowledge Areas: 1, 2, 3
NH Core Knowledge Areas: 2, 3, 4
CDA Subject Areas: 3, 4, 8

31 Promoting Social & Emotional Development, Part 5*

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center- Aud.
F, Lebanon, NH • 6:00 - 9:00 pm

See full description under March 17. Attendance on all five dates, March 17, 22, 24, 29 and 31 is required and outside work will be assigned. Presenter: Jan Crow, M.Ed.

VT Core Knowledge Areas: 1, 2, 3
NH Core Knowledge Areas: 2, 3, 4
CDA Subject Areas: 3, 4, 8

*Beyond the Fundamentals: Level II

Building on entry level knowledge and skills, Beyond the Fundamentals curricula is based on Level II core competencies and the CDA credential subject areas. To assist providers in achieving Level II on the Northern Lights career ladder, there are seven Level II: Beyond the Fundamentals training modules, ranging from 4-17 hours each. Different modules are offered annually in each region of the state and can be taken in any order. Each includes practice and assignments that can be used for a CDA application or Level II portfolio review. For more information, including an overview of the entire series, visit http://northernlightscdc.org/training/state-wide-curricula/beyond-the-fundamentals. To see which modules are being offered locally this academic year, check out page 7 of the Child Care Project training calendar (http://www.dartmouth.edu/~ccp/providers/ccp_training_calendar15-16.pdf).
5  Let's Play  
Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center- Aud. E, Lebanon, NH • 6:30 - 8:30 pm • $10  
It has been said that children’s work is play; and that through play children learn how to learn. Supporting children’s play is a skill that takes practice. This interactive workshop will explore the relationship between play and learning and examine approaches to supporting preschool children’s play in developmentally appropriate ways. The focus will be on imaginary play and engaging as a partner in play, not curriculum planning or directed activities. Providers working with 3-6 year olds are welcome.  
Presenter: Elizabeth K. Reed, Elizabeth K. Reed Consulting, LLC  
VT Core Knowledge Areas: 1, 3  
NH Core Knowledge Areas: 3, 4  
CDA Subject Areas: 1, 2, 3, 8

14  Nurturing Healthy Sexual Development  
Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center- Aud. E, Lebanon, NH • 6:30 - 8:30 pm • $10  
This training will help you to better understand the sexual development of children, and how to respond to children’s sexual behaviors and questions in ways that promote healthy development. Come explore why a crucial component of nurturing healthy sexual development is protecting children from sexual abuse. Leave with an understanding of the scope of child sexual abuse and the relationship between healthy sexuality and child sexual abuse prevention. Cosponsored by Prevent Child Abuse Vermont. Presenter: Johanna Straavaldsen, Healthy Relationships Project Director, Prevent Child Abuse Vermont  
VT Core Knowledge Areas: 1, 4, 5  
NH Core Knowledge Areas: 3, 4  
CDA Subject Areas: 2, 3, 6, 8  
Advanced Specialized Child Care Services: 2 hours

19  “Look at me when I’m talking to you!” and Other Common Mistakes We Make Working with Young Children  
Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center- Aud. G, Lebanon, NH • 6:30 - 8:30 pm • $10  
Effects on personality and temperament are both biological and environmental–with the strongest influences beginning at birth with primary caregivers. Children’s social and emotional experiences shape the relationships they form with others. As adults, we often set unrealistic expectations in our interactions with young children and we sometimes apply developmentally inappropriate logic and reasoning to their actions. Join us in an examination of behavior from a strengths-based approach through the lens of cultural competency. We’ll explore how behavior at a young age is often “mimicked” or develops from experiences, and how with some simple adjustments we can achieve more positive and developmentally appropriate interactions. Presenter: Jessica Sugrue, MS, Independent Education and Training Consultant  
VT Core Knowledge Areas: 1, 3  
NH Core Knowledge Areas: 3, 4  
CDA Subject Areas: 3, 8  
Advanced Specialized Child Care Services: 2 hours

21  Water Safety Training  
Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center- Aud. E, Lebanon, NH • 6:30 - 9:00 pm • $10  
Join us for an exciting 2½ hours of information that could change the way supervising adults look at water activities and young children. Attending this workshop fulfills the NH Child Care Program Licensing Rule He-C 4002.29(q)(3) training requirement for a basic water safety course and allows NH child care staff to have children participate in water related activities and will help prevent drowning. Being a dry-land training,
swimsuits are not necessary. **NH and VT, center- and home-based providers are welcome.** Cosponsored by Upper Valley Child Care Association. **Presenter:** Scott Noyes, Empowering Programs

**VT Core Knowledge Area:** 4 • **NH Core Knowledge Area:** 4 • **CDA Subject Area:** 1

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### 30 Safety with Daring

**SA**

Center for Learning, Adventure & Discovery, Plainfield, NH • 9:30 am - 12:30 pm • $10

Young children take risks each and every day; babies toddle and tumble while taking first steps, 2-year-olds attempt to balance on tricycles, and 5-year-olds climb and jump from heights taller than themselves. It is through these explorations that children learn about the world and their place in it. Our goal should not be to stop them from being daring, but to minimize the hazards around them as they are taking these necessary risks. This workshop will address the definition of hazard from a developmental perspective, as well as examine how our own fears and experiences influence our personal definition and practice. We will discuss how adults impact the opportunities for daring and how to set up environments that support—and even encourage—it. **Presenter:** Lori Harris, MS, Early Childhood Education Consultant & Trainer

**VT Core Knowledge Areas:** 1, 3, 4 • **NH Core Knowledge Areas:** 3, 4 • **CDA Subject Areas:** 1, 2, 3, 8

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### 3 Observing and Recording Children’s Behavior, Part 1 (*Level II*)

**TU**

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center- Aud. F, Lebanon, NH • 6:00 - 9:00 pm • $15

This two-part, six-hour series offers an introduction to the importance and value of purposeful observation in the early childhood classroom. This training is useful to entry-level professionals new to the field of early education, as well as experienced caregivers who are looking to incorporate systematic and purposeful observation in their work with children. We will examine how observation can be used to support individual children and improve the overall quality of the learning environment. Helpful systems and tools will be explored. **Attendance on both dates, May 3 and 10 is required.** *See page 3 for information on Level II.* **Presenter:** Sharon Adams, M.S., Early Childhood Education Consultant and Master Instructor

**VT Core Knowledge Areas:** 1, 3

**NH Core Knowledge Areas:** 3, 4, 5

**CDA Subject Area:** 7

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### 5 Farm to Preschool: Gardening with Children

**TH**

Dartmouth College Child Care Center- multi & outside, Hanover, NH • 6:30 - 8:30 pm • $10

Gardening engages children by providing an interactive environment to observe, discover, experiment, nurture and learn from. School and child care gardens are living laboratories where interdisciplinary lessons are drawn from real life experiences, encouraging children to become active participants in the learning process. Studies have shown that school gardens encourage preference and consumption of fruits and vegetables, increase parental support and involvement, and improve children’s enthusiasm about preschool/child care, teamwork skills and self-understanding. Gardens can be easily integrated into any program and can be as simple as a raised bed or a few containers. Come learn all about gardening with children! **Presenter:** Jim McCracken, Place-Based Education Consultant

**VT Core Knowledge Areas:** 3, 4

**NH Core Knowledge Areas:** 3, 4

**CDA Subject Area:** 1
**14  Child Care Project Annual Early Childhood Mini-Conference: All Day on Play**

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center- Aud. E & F, Lebanon, NH • 9:00 am - 4:00 pm • $40

Presenter: Lisa Guerrero, M.Ed.

**The Play Instinct: Have You Lost Yours**

We know that play is an essential part of every child's life and is vital for the enjoyment of childhood as well as healthy brain development. But, play is not just for children! If we are going to be successful advocates for play in the lives of children and families, then we need to be in touch with our own playful selves. In the morning session, come explore several types of play in an effort to reconnect with your own play instinct. From there, the discussion will focus on the value of play and ways in which we can promote playfulness as the foundation for strengthening the families with whom we work. Sure to be fun and insightful!

**Why Outside Play Matters: The Provider's Role in Fostering Young Children’s Development Outdoors**

Do ALL the children in your program get outside everyday, even the youngest babies? How do you spend your time outside with your children? Provider involvement in outdoor play can heighten a child’s learning experience and stimulate positive developmental achievements. But what does that involvement look like? This afternoon session will allow us to reflect on our currently held beliefs about the functions of outdoor play and discover ways of thinking about the role adults play in facilitating quality experiences. We will examine best practices and discuss strategies we can use to broaden our perspectives and access the full potential for learning in an outdoor environment. We will also explore the idea of outdoor classrooms, making sure all the learning areas that are visible in the indoor learning environment are represented outside as well.

VT Core Knowledge Areas: 1-5 • NH Core Knowledge Areas: 1-4 • CDA Subject Areas: 1-4, 8

Registration fee includes continental breakfast and afternoon snack. Lunch is on your own, during the 1-hour mid-day break. Presenter, Lisa Guerrero has been a professional in the field of early care and education for over twenty years and has come to be known for her energy, passion and dedication to supporting children and families. Her roles have included being an early childhood educator of children birth through age 8 in traditional, private and early intervention programs; an administrator of a center-based early childhood program; and an owner and operator of a home-based infant and toddler center. Currently, Lisa presents professional development trainings and seminars on promoting quality outdoor experiences for children, supporting the development of sensitive and inclusive learning environments, and advocating for play. When not working, Lisa can be found pursuing a PhD in Leadership, Policy and Change; exercising and dancing; hanging out with her 17-year-old twins and dogs; volunteering in the community; or walking through the beautiful Vermont countryside.

Register online at http://dartmouth.imodules.com/ccp OR with the paper registration form on pages 9-10 (and at www.dartmouth.edu/~ccp).
10 **Observing and Recording Children’s Behavior, Part 2***

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center-Aud.
E, Lebanon, NH • 6:00 - 9:00 pm

See full description under May 3. *Attendance on both dates, May 3 and 10 is required. *See page 3 for information on Level II. **Presenter: Sharon Adams, M.S., Early Childhood Education Consultant and Master Instructor**

**VT Core Knowledge Areas:** 1, 3

**NH Core Knowledge Areas:** 3, 4, 5

**CDA Subject Area:** 7

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19 **Medication Administration in Early Care and Education Settings, Parts A and B**

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center-Aud.
E, Lebanon, NH • 6:00 - 9:00 pm • $10

The first part (A) is taken on line, and includes 5 short modules. First, go to http://northernlightscdc.org/training/state-wide-curricula/medication-administration-module/ and READ (and print!) the resources then click on the picture to open the modules. There is a quiz at the end of each part. **You must complete all of the modules in Part A and complete each quiz with an 80% or higher pass rate by May 5, in order to be eligible to take part B.**

The second part (B) is completed in the face-to-face, group training. In this training, participants will learn to identify different types of medication, why medication is given and how it is given; improve medication storage preparation and administration techniques; support good documentation of medication administration, and recognize and respond to adverse reactions to medication; and develop and implement appropriate policies about medication administration. After completion of both parts (online and face-to-face), documentation of professional development for 5 hours of training credit will be awarded.

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26 **The Impact of Trauma and Neglect on Young Children**

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center- Aud.
E, Lebanon, NH • 6:30 - 8:30 pm • $10

Young children are particularly susceptible to early abuse and neglect, and that maltreatment can have profound impact on their future growth and development. This training will highlight the ways trauma impacts brain development in young children as well as the ways it impacts children’s ability to meet normal developmental milestones. We’ll explore symptoms that might indicate a child is experiencing abuse or neglect at home and learn when a report to DCF or DCYF is mandated. What types of involvement DCF/DCYF might have with families and how that can impact child care providers will be addressed. Community resources that can help stressed families and ways these resources can be presented to families in a kind, nonjudgmental way will be examined. Together we will also learn strategies to help provide a supportive environment for children who have experienced early trauma. **Presenter: Tonya McMurray, M.Ed., LCMHC, Mental Health Counselor, The Family Place**

**VT Core Knowledge Areas:** 1, 2, 5

**NH Core Knowledge Areas:** 2, 4

**CDA Subject Areas:** 3, 4, 5

**Advanced Specialized Child Care Services:** 2 hours
It’s time to focus on infants and toddlers with Scott Noyes! The first part of this two-part training will examine infancy issues in the first year of life ranging from sleeping patterns to attachment concepts. The how and why of playing with babies and an introduction to brain development research will be explored in this deliberative session.

**To celebrate your commitment to your ongoing professional development, the Child Care Project – with support from Vermont Birth to Five – is waiving the fee for this final training series of the academic year! Cosponsored by Vermont Birth to Five. Attendance on both dates, June 7 and 9 is strongly recommended though not required. Presenter: Scott Noyes

VT Core Knowledge Areas: 1, 3 • NH Core Knowledge Areas: 3, 4 • CDA Subject Areas: 1, 2, 3, 8

BFIS in VT

www.brightfutures.dcf.state.vt.us

The Bright Futures Information System (BFIS) is a Vermont data management system designed and operated by the VT Child Development Division. Hundreds of statewide early care and education professional development opportunities (workshops, classes and conferences) are listed and updated regularly in the BFIS Course Calendar. Go to www.brightfutures.dcf.state.vt.us, click on Course Calendar under Resources for Early Childhood and Afterschool Professionals near the bottom of the page and start searching.

Online Training & Coursework

http://northernlightscdc.org/training/online-training-and-coursework

VT’s Northern Lights Career Development Center reviews and approves sponsors of online training that is not for college credit. These are approved sponsors whose modules may count as training hours required for VT Child Development Division licensing/registration, STARS application/renewal, Child Development Associate (CDA) initial credential and/or VT Agency of Education educator licensure renewal, and more.

Child Care Aware of NH

http://nh.childcareaware.org

Providers can find information on workshops and training events being offered through Southern NH Services Child Care Resource & Referral Network. Searches can be filtered by catchment area and/or month from the home page (right hand side, mid-way down the page under Search For Training).

Child Care Aware Training Academy

http://naccrra.smarthorizons.org/child-care-providers.html

The Child Care Aware Training Academy™ offers more than 300 online training courses for center-based and family child care providers. Courses were developed by subject matter experts for providers working towards their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, CDA renewal or annual training requirements. Training Academy courses are approved for Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and are offered to providers at no additional cost. Courses are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year!
Child Care Project
Spring 2016 Professional Development Registration Form

Name _____________________________________________  VT Quality Case ID _____________

Home Mailing Address ________________________________________________________________

Home Town, State & Zip __________________________________________________________________

Workplace Name ____________________________________  Workplace Town _______________

Email ______________________________________________________________________________

Phones:  Home ___________________  Work ___________________  Cell ___________________

Registration Policies

Registration: Pre-registration with payment is required. Registration is accepted online at http://dartmouth.imodules.com/ccp or through the mail on a rolling basis, within the time frame below, until a training fills. A wait list will be kept for fully enrolled training. Neither phone nor email registrations are accepted. Seasonal registration forms are available prior to the first day of registration at www.dartmouth.edu/~ccp. Please register only for trainings printed on these forms; use one form per person. We must receive your registration prior to training and may not be able to accommodate walk-ins.

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<td>Winter ’15/16</td>
<td>Nov. 23</td>
<td>Dec. – Feb.</td>
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Payment: Pay via credit card online or by check if mailing. Payment (or pre-approved scholarship) must accompany registration. Please make check payable to Child Care Project. Fees are as follows, unless otherwise noted in the training description.

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Scholarships: Limited scholarships are available to child care providers facing significant financial need. Individuals in our coverage area may request assistance of $10 per academic year by calling the Child Care Project at (603) 646-3233 prior to registration.

Confirmation: Upon receipt of registration and payment, confirmation will be sent via email (or by phone if an email address is not provided). Reminder phone calls will be made one to three days prior to training.

Cancellation: If a training is canceled and/or rescheduled by the Child Care Project, registrants will be notified by email or by phone. Cancellations will also be posted on our website. In the event of canceled training, credit will be issued toward a future training.

If you are unable to attend training for which you are registered, please call or email with as much advance notice as possible. If cancellation is received with at least 24 hours advance notice, credit will be issued toward future training. If you do not get into training for which you are wait listed, credit will be issued. Refunds are not available and credit is not given for “no shows.”

Training Credit: To redeem a training credit, registration must be made using the paper registration form sent via mail. Credits cannot be redeemed through the online registration site.

To register via mail, complete both sides of this form and mail with check to:
Child Care Project, 17 ½ Lebanon Street, Suite 2, Hanover, NH 03755
**Workshop Selection:** Check in the first column the training(s) you would like to attend.

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**Total Registration Fee** $ 

**Payment Information**

- [ ] Check Enclosed  
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  Check # ________________

- [ ] Scholarship Awarded  
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  Date of Award ____________  
  Awarded By ________________

- [ ] Cancellation Credit Applied  
  Credit Amount $ ___________  
  Date of Credit ____________

To register via mail, complete both sides of this form and mail with check to:  
Child Care Project, 17 ½ Lebanon Street, Suite 2, Hanover, NH 03755

**OR**

To register online with a credit card payment, go to  
Other Training Opportunities

CPR & First Aid Trainings
Most classes require pre-registration and pre-payment; many are space limited and could be canceled in the event of low enrollment. Contact the individual site for more information or to register.

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center Women’s Health Resource Center
Heartsaver Adult, Child and Infant CPR Certification: Mar. 15, 6:00-9:00 pm. $55. On the Mall (9 Hanover Street) in Lebanon, NH. American Heart Association classes. Scholarships available. (603) 650-2600 or www.dartmouth-hitchcock.org/womens_resource_ctr/all_whrc_classes.html.

Upper Valley Aquatic Center
Red Cross CPR and First Aid Certification: Mar. 9 or Mar. 30, 4:00-9:00 pm. $110. 100 Arboretum Lane in White River Junction, VT. Red Cross classes. Registration form online: http://uvacswim.org/swimming/safety/ or (802) 296-2850 x206.

New London Hospital
Heartsaver CPR Recertification: Mar. 30, Apr. 21 or May 12, 6:00 pm. $25. Weber Room, 273 County Road in New London, NH. American Heart Association classes. Register online. www.newlondonhospital.org/events/courses_classes_schedule/# or (603) 526-5501.

Valley Regional Hospital
Heartsaver Adult, Child and Infant CPR - New and Recertification: May 11, 5:00-8:30 pm. 243 Elm Street in Claremont, NH. American Heart Association classes. Private courses for groups of six or more scheduled upon request. (603) 542-1839 or beth.thibault@vrh.org.

www.ProCPR.org
ProFirstAid Adult, Child & Infant CPR & First Aid Recertification: Online, $39.95. (888) 406-7487 or www.ProCPR.org. (Accepted in VT for recertification.)

Upper Valley Ambulance, Inc. in Fairlee, VT is an American Heart Association Training Center; for CPR and first aid training information, contact Jody Gagnon at (802) 333-4043 x0.

White River Valley Ambulance in Bethel, VT offers CPR and first aid training in Bethel or at your site; call (802) 234-6800 for details.

You may also find a class by phoning your local fire station - many times they have trained staff willing to teach CPR and/or first aid - or your community recreation department.

VT Essential Maintenance Practices for the Stabilization of Lead Paint
Owners of child care facilities – including family child care homes – built before 1978 are required to attend this training once before getting registered. The owner or a person who has successfully completed an approved training program must then perform lead paint stabilization procedures annually. To reserve a seat at an upcoming Vermont Department of Health approved Essential Maintenance Practices training, call the number listed. For more information, visit LeadSafeVermont at www.leadsafevermont.org/html/landlords.html.

• Mar. 22, 5:00 pm at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital in Brattleboro, VT. (802) 463-9927 x208

• Mar. 22, 5:00 pm at City Hall in Burlington, VT. (802) 865-5323

• Apr. 6, 5:00 pm at St. Johnsbury Academy in St. Johnsbury, VT. (802) 828-5064

• Apr. 19, 5:00 pm at Howard Dean Center in Springfield, VT. (802) 463-9927 x208
VT Basic Specialized Child Care Services Training

Specialized Child Care (SCCS) encompasses Vermont subsidized child care for children eligible under one of the following service needs:

- **Protective Services** for a child who has been a victim of abuse or neglect and child care is part of a plan to support the child, thus reducing the risk of future abuse/neglect;

- **Family Support** for a child in a family experiencing significant stress where child care is part of a larger family plan to address specific issues;

- **Special Need** for a child in child care with a special physical or developmental need.

Providers must attend a 6-hour Basic SCCS training prior to signing the Provider Agreement, Part 3 and being granted SCCS status enabling them to care for children with a SCCS need. This training is offered annually in the fall by the Child Care Project. Upcoming options around the state are below. Search the BFIS Course Calendar for more information: www.brightfutures.dcf.state.vt.us.

- **Mar. 5**, 8:30 am-2:30 pm in Middlebury, VT. (802) 388-4304 to register.

- **Mar. 21 & 28**, 6:00-9:00 pm in St. Albans, VT. (802) 393-6591 to register.

- **Mar. 23 & 30**, 6:00-9:00 pm in Bennington, VT. (802) 447-3778 to register. $20 fee.

- **Apr. 16**, 8:30 am-2:30 pm in Rutland, VT. (802) 747-0033 to register. $5 fee.

- **May 14**, 10:00 am-4:00 pm in Morrisville, VT. (802) 888-5229 to register.

24th Annual VT Kindergarten Conference

Sponsored by the VT Agency of Education and the Early Childhood PreK-3 Program at the University of VT, the theme for this year’s Kindergarten Conference is “Natural Learning: The Outdoor Classroom.” It will take place on **March 25** at the Hilton Hotel in Burlington, VT. The conference program and online registration will be posted on http://education.vermont.gov/calendar in the near future. For more information, contact Shirley Rawson at shirley.rawson@vermont.gov or (802) 479-1469.

Tips & Tools for the Early Childhood Special Educator

The VT Higher Education Collaborative is hosting a professional development day for early childhood special educators on **March 28** at Capital Plaza in Montpelier, VT. This workshop will focus on sharpening the skills and adding to the toolbox of the early childhood special educator, offer organizational tools and strategies related to each step so as to maximize one’s time and energy, explore the daily operations and responsibilities of being a preschool case manager/service provider, and discuss cost-effective, time-smart approaches to the work. A make and take session will be included for creating materials that can be used the next day. Cost is $175 and includes lunch. For more information and to register, visit www.vthec.org.

31st Annual MacNamee Memorial Professional Conference

This year’s presentation, “Collaborative and Proactive Solutions: Understanding and Helping Students with Social, Emotional and Behavioral Challenges” by Dr. Ross Greene will be the D. Hugh MacNamee Memorial Trust’s final conference. The event will take place on **March 31** at the Fireside Inn in West Lebanon, NH. Cost is $100. For more information and to register, visit http://www.dhmtrust.org/2016/2016Conference.htm.

VCCPA 3rd Annual Conference

The 2016 VT Child Care Providers Association’s conference on **April 9** at Steakhouse Restaurant in Barre, VT will feature Charlie Appelstein as the keynote speaker. Fees vary from $30-65. Included in the fee are six hours of training (keynote and morning and afternoon workshops), breakfast, lunch and Child Care Project Newsletter.
NH DCYF 23rd Annual Conference
The NH Division for Children, Youth and Families 2016 conference will be held on April 15 at the Radisson Hotel and Conference Center in Manchester, NH. This year’s conference is titled “Being Well and Working Well: Building a Culture of Safety with Families and Communities.” Registration information will be available in March. Email Pam Seufert at pjseufert@dhhs.state.nh.us to be notified when registration opens.

NHAECYC 22nd Annual Spring Conference
The NH Association for the Education of Young Children 2016 spring conference will take place on April 16 at Nashua Community College in Nashua, NH. Keynote speaker is Paul Vincent Nunes; many workshops to choose from over three sessions. Fees vary. Early bird registration available through March 18; registration ends April 3. For more information and to register, visit http://nhaecyc.org/professional-development/registration/.

Teaching Strategies Gold Introductory Training
The VT Agency of Education is conducting a free, two-part Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) Introductory training on April 23 and 30 from 8:30 am-3:30 pm each day in White River Junction, VT. The training is open to all early educators supporting children 0-5 in VT. Participants are expected to attend the full 12 hours. For more information, contact Shirley Rawson at shirley.rawson@vermont.gov or (802) 479-1469. To register, visit www.research.net/r/TSINTRO_April23and30.

In Bloom in New England Spring Conference
Antioch University New England Center for School Renewal is hosting their annual conference focused on promising practices in nature-based early childhood education on May 12 at Antioch University New England in Keene, NH and on June 13 at Shelburne Farms in Shelburne, VT. Select one date; many workshops from which to choose. For more information, visit www.antiochne.edu or contact Peg Smeltz at msmeltz@antioch.edu or (603) 283-2301.

Local Colleges with Evening & Online Early Childhood Education Classes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
<th>Spring Semester</th>
<th>Summer Semester</th>
<th>Registration Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community College of Vermont</td>
<td>145 Billings Farm Road, Wilder, VT</td>
<td>(802) 295-8822 • <a href="http://www.ccv.edu">www.ccv.edu</a></td>
<td>Spring semester in progress; ends May 6.</td>
<td>Summer semester runs May 23-August 15; registration open now.</td>
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<tr>
<td>River Valley Community College</td>
<td>Claremont Campus 1 College Place, Claremont, NH Lebanon Academic Center 15 Hanover Street, Lebanon, NH</td>
<td>(800) 837-0658 • <a href="http://www.rivervalley.edu">www.rivervalley.edu</a></td>
<td>Spring semester in progress; ends May 9.</td>
<td>Summer semester runs May 31-August 5. Registration for summer and fall semesters opens April 1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Granite State College</td>
<td>Lebanon Academic Campus 24 Airport Road, West Lebanon, NH Claremont Regional Campus 27 Pleasant Street, Claremont, NH</td>
<td>(603) 542-3841 • <a href="http://www.granite.edu">www.granite.edu</a></td>
<td>Winter term in progress; ends March 25.</td>
<td>Spring term runs April 4-June 24; registration open now.</td>
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Local ECE Professional Support Networks

Upper Valley Child Care Association
For: All Upper Valley child care center directors, administrators, family child care providers and early childhood professionals from both NH and VT

Meets: 2nd Tuesday of each month, 1:00-3:00 pm at Franklin Pierce University in West Lebanon, NH

Focus of upcoming meeting: Mar. 8: Tracy Pond, Program Manager for Southern NH Services, Inc. Child Care Resource and Referral will share updates on NH’s new resource and referral system

For more information, contact: Jeff Robbins at (603) 646-6610 or jeff.robbins@dartmouth.edu

Connections
For: All Orange County, VT child care and other professionals directly working with young children

Meets: 1st Wednesday of each month, 6:30-8:30 pm at Valley Cooperative Preschool in Bradford, VT

Focus of upcoming meetings: Pizza is served at all meetings, unless otherwise noted.

- Mar. 2: The latest research on provider and child stress; tips and suggestions for making stressful times a bit easier to deal with; led by Cynthia Brush-Pires of Maple Leaf Children’s Center.

- Apr. 6: Hands-on science explorations that can easily be done with children; concepts and strategies for incorporating more science activities into the classroom.

- May 4: Using math with children in a variety of fun and enlightening ways; new ways to incorporate counting, sorting and matching into the curriculum.

For more information or to RSVP, contact: Meri Saladino at (802) 222-4236 or petermerisal@gmail.com

Early Childhood Professionals Network
For: All home- and center-based providers from northern Windsor and southern Orange Counties in VT

Meets: 2nd Monday of each month, 6:30-8:30 pm at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, Auditorium C & D in Lebanon, NH (unless otherwise noted)

Focus of upcoming meetings: All meetings begin with a pot-luck dinner and informal conversation, and conclude with distribution of curriculum materials to those in attendance, unless otherwise noted.

- Mar. 14: Discussion of different curriculums; fellow providers will offer short presentations on curriculums they use/have used.

- Apr. 11: Members only meeting. Jennyfer Stone teaches about essential oils. Network will cover the cost of making one oil-based item for members who RSVP by Apr. 1 to the network email. Additional items cost $5 each.

- May 2: Assembling of provider appreciation gift bags for UVCCA’s Provider Appreciation Dinner; we’ll begin with our own in-house provider appreciation dinner.

- May 23: Free training by Pat Sirgiey from VT Child Care Food Program: Sugar, Sugar, Everywhere.

For more information, contact: Rachel Hunter at (802) 886-1070 or Michelle Scott at (802) 356-2755, or email earlychildhoodprofessionalntwk@yahoo.com
Child Care Provider Appreciation Night Event
SAVE THE DATE: FRIDAY, MAY 6 from 6:00-8:00 pm all local child care providers (home- and center-based) are invited to the Upper Valley Child Care Association sponsored Provider Appreciation Night Dinner and Bingo in White River Junction, VT. This free annual event is supported in part by our local provider network groups with funding from VT Child Development Division and VT Birth to Five. Watch for details in early April!

Notes of Interest

• Megan Smith of Bradford, VT - 3 stars
• Visual Eyes Creativity Center in Thetford Center, VT - 3 stars
• World of Discovery II in White River Junction, VT - 4 stars

CCV College Credit for Fundamentals Course
If you have successfully complete the Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals course you could get three college credits from Community College of VT (CCV). If you are a CCV student, ask your advisor about Course Challenge for the Fundamentals course. CCV will select a faculty member to evaluate your knowledge of the Fundamentals course learning objectives. The process is completed in 60 days or less and the CCV credits can be transferred to other colleges that accept CCV credits. You pay only a one-time course challenge fee equal to the cost of one college credit - to earn three credits, with no additional costs! Non-CCV students should contact the Prior Learning Assessment Office at (802) 828-4064 or priorlearning@ccv.edu to inquire about a course challenge. Visit http://ccv.edu/explore-ccv-programs/credit-for-what-you-know/ for more information on this process and other credit for prior learning options.

Earn your Associate Degree with Support from TEACH
TEACH Early Childhood VT, a project of the VT Association for the Education of Young Children, is looking for more early childhood professionals interested in earning an Associate Degree. If you work in VT-regulated child care, and want to get your Associate Degree in early childhood from Community College of VT, check out http://vaeyc.org/quality-improvement/teach/. VT TEACH provides scholarship funds and other supports to enable you to get your degree, with the support of your program. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Call (802) 244-6282 or email teachearlychildhoodvermont@vaeyc.org for more information.

Congratulations!
... to the following providers for recently earning a VT Northern Lights Career Development Center credential or certificate. Way to go!

• Andrea Abraham of Fairlee, VT - Level III-A
• Amanda Beattie of Randolph, VT - Level III-A
• Melissa Frary of South Royalton, VT - Level III-A
• Bridget LaValette of White River Junction, VT - Level II
• Angelia Lynn Mason of Thetford Center, VT - Level III-B
• Karen Mugford of Randolph, VT - Level III-A
• Brandee Platt of White River Junction, VT - Level IV-A
• Lisa Pike of Bradford, VT - Program Director, Step 2
• Isamarie Sanville of Norwich, VT - Level II
• Megan Smith of Bradford, VT - Level III-A
• Jennifer Sprague of South Royalton, VT - Level II
• Erica Young of Randolph, VT - Level IV-B

... to the following family child care providers and center-based programs for joining or moving up in VT’s Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS). Super work!

• Ex.C.E.L. Rochester in Rochester, VT - 2 stars
• Ex.C.E.L. Stockbridge in Stockbridge, VT - 3 stars
• Melissa Frary of South Royalton, VT - 3 stars
• Karin Furman of Stockbridge, VT - 2 stars
• Rebecca Mattoon of Chelsea, VT - 2 stars

Spring 2016
VT Early Learning Challenge Grant Updates
Curious about what’s happening with the VT Early Learning Challenge Grant? Visit http://building-brightfutures.org/elc_grant/updates/ for monthly updates and special announcements regarding the grant. Or, email Carolyn Wesley at carolyn.wesley@vermont.gov to request grant updates via email.

Comment Regarding Revisions to VT Afterschool Child Care Programs Regulations
The VT Licensing Regulations for Afterschool Child Care Programs recently underwent revision, were adopted by the VT Department for Children and Families, and were implemented on January 1. However, proposed changes to these new regulations are now being promulgating in order to comply with state and federal laws. For more information, to review the proposed revisions and to make online comments or get the address for mailing comments, visit http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd-blog/proposal-revisions-afterschool-child-care-programs-regulations. A local public comment hearing will be held on March 24 from 6:30-8:00 pm at The Family Place in Wilder, VT. All online and mailed comments are due by April 1. Email Jen Benedict with questions at jennifer.benedict@vermont.gov.

22nd Annual Early Childhood Day at the VT Legislature
This year’s Early Childhood Day at the VT Legislature is March 9 at the VT State House and the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Montpelier, VT. The VT Early Childhood Alliance, a statewide coalition of early childhood professionals, parents, businesses and strategic partners working together to realize the promise of every VT child, invites you to join hundreds of advocates to hear Rhian Allvin give the keynote address and the VT gubernatorial candidates talk about early childhood. Visit http://vermontearlychildhoodalliance.org/ for the day’s agenda, co-sponsors and registration information.

18th Annual Celebration of NH Early Childhood & Afterschool Professionals
The NH Child Development Bureau, Child Care Aware of NH, NH Afterschool Network and Early Learning NH is holding this annual celebration on April 12 at Grace Capital Church in Pembroke, NH. This year’s theme is Explore, Innovate and Lead! and, for the first time ever, a STEM Exploratorium will be offered prior to the celebration. Join the celebrate of professionals working across NH in early childhood and afterschool. For more information, visit http://nh.childcareaware.org/news/save-the-date-2016-18th-annual-celebration-of-early-childhood-and-afterschool-professionals/.

Weekly Wednesday Words
This once a week (once every two weeks in the summer) email from the Child Care Project contains notes and flyers that we’ve collected throughout the week that might be of interest to you between quarterly newsletters, as well as a reminder of our upcoming professional development opportunities. If you or a colleague would like to be added to our email distribution list or if you have information to share, please let us know: (603) 646-3233 or childcare.project@dartmouth.edu.

Free VINS Pass Offer
Interested in taking a field trip or even a weekend outing with your own family? Thanks to continued funding provided by VT Starting Points, the Child Care Project has a free pass to the Vermont Institute of Natural Science’s (VINS) Nature Center located a quarter of a mile west of the Quechee Gorge at 6565 Woodstock Road (Route 4) in Quechee, VT. The pass is for child care providers and allows entrance to one adult and up to five children over age 2 (children under age 2 are welcome, but are always free and not included in the count) for a day. Contact us with a specific date request and we will email you a pass for that day. For more information on VINS, including year-round hours and driving directions, visit www.vinsweb.org or call (802) 359-5000.
VT Subsidy Column

Many child care providers have called us with questions about the VT Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP, aka, Subsidy). We are happy to have this opportunity to share general information about the program with you. If you have any suggestions for this column or topics you would like us to cover, please let us know.

Geraldine, Kathy, Megan and Sue at The Family Place, (802) 649-3268

Catchment area
The Family Place child care subsidy program serves only people who reside in the towns listed below. It doesn’t matter where the child attends child care. If you are helping someone who lives in a town not on this list, you can call us and we will tell you where they need to send their application. Location names are followed by (the town they are in).

Barnard, Bethel, Bradford, Bridgewater, Chelsea, Corinth, Ely (Fairlee), Fairlee, Gaysville (Stockbridge), Hartford, Hartland, Norwich, Pomfret, Post Mills (Thetford), Quechee (Hartford), Randolph, Rochester, Royalton, Sharon, South Royalton (Royalton), Stockbridge, Strafford, Taftsville (Woodstock), Thetford, Tunbridge, Vershire, West Fairlee, White River Junction (Hartford), Wilder (Hartford), Woodstock

Certificates are the way that your program gets paid by the state. When a certificate is made you get a copy through the system and that child’s name will appear in “Attendance and Invoicing” so you can enter hours attended. The certificate will tell you the start date, the end date, the child’s name, whether they are authorized for full-time or part-time, at what percentage, and the amount the state will pay your program per week. Certificates are sent to the parents via US mail.

Why do certificates end?
• It may be time for the parent to turn in an annual application. We mail out renewal applications 6 weeks before the annual end date.
• When a birthday puts a child into a different category (infant, toddler, preschool, school-aged) the certificate will end right after their birthday, and usually a new one with the age group begins.
• Certificates for school-aged children often end at the end of school, and again at the end of summer. The parent must tell their Eligibility Specialist what their child care needs are for the next period of time.
• The parents may need to provide more information to the subsidy program for the certificates to continue. For example, parents in school need to provide information at the beginning and end of each semester, and a parent with a new job needs to provide paystubs. There are sometimes other reasons that certificates are made for short periods of time.
• If the parent has told us that they are removing the child from your program, we will end the certificate. We encourage parents to give notice, and we ask if they have given notice before we end the certificate. If they have not given notice, we can give you one week for notice. (N code, with permission only)

What is a full-time/part-time certificate?
These certificates are made for children aged 6 and above who are eligible for full-time subsidy, during school months. They are usually made for 25 hours and show the part-time payment, but allow the provider to be paid full-time if full-time attendance is entered, such as during school vacations. (Part-time: 1-25 hours per week; full-time: 26-50 hours per week)
You Can Do It! Improving Constrained Outdoor Spaces

“I’d love to create a more nature-friendly outdoor space, but I don’t think I can because...” Sound familiar? There are many reasons people give for not being able to make changes to constrained spaces, but actually there are solutions to almost any challenge. Let’s explore these together in this article.

In recent years there has been increased interest in nature-based play and learning at early childhood facilities. Research is showing many benefits when children are able to connect with nature on a daily basis. But what if your outdoor environment is one that doesn’t allow for considerable redesign or transformation? Perhaps you lease space and the owner will not agree to things you’d like to do, like removing pavement, permanently installing plant materials, or adjusting fence lines? Or perhaps your outdoor space has a newer play structure that dominates the area you have to work with and cannot be removed for a variety of reasons. Maybe it’s just that your outdoor space isn’t working the way you thought it could and you don’t have much of a budget to use for making changes. What are some of the steps you could take if you cannot do a major transformation of your outdoor space?

**Remember the Basics**

Much research has been done surrounding the reasons why natural outdoor classrooms function well or poorly. Most well-functioning classrooms have common attributes, which are reflected in the “Universal Principles for Connecting Children with Nature” developed by the World Forum Foundation’s Nature Action Collaborative for Children leadership team. These principles address design attributes for children, design professionals, educators. A natural outdoor classroom will:

- use local plants, animals, natural materials, and community contributions as much as possible.
- provide multi-functionality/multiple possibilities.
- stimulate all the senses.
- be accessible to all abilities.
- inspire wonder and discovery.
- be sustainable and develop over time.

In my personal experience a few corollary principles are very important to remember:

- Define spaces clearly enough so that a child’s work is less likely to be interrupted by another child inadvertently running through the space. Defined spaces also add an element of consistency that comforts children.
- Provide a variety of areas so that no one area is overwhelmed, adding potential for needless conflict.
- Provide an adequate number of mixed loose parts for exploration. What is an adequate number? If you observe children frequently combing the entire yard for other objects and becoming frustrated when they can’t find what they want to use in their exploration, then you need to supply more.

Okay, so how do you begin? Let’s take it one step at a time.

**Think Dimensionally**

I’m guessing most of us are pretty comfortable working in two dimensions. We think two-dimensionally when we plan how to position furniture in the place we live, consider how to lay out an indoor classroom, or draw a simple map for a friend illustrating how to get to our home. We think about basic length and width.

Child Care Project Newsletter
Let’s start out thinking two-dimensionally about your outdoor play space. If you have an existing play structure, first become familiar with use zones and their dimensional requirements. In the United States, a use zone of 6 feet of clear space is recommended or required (with a few exceptions that require more generous clear areas). In other parts of the world there are most likely different standards. Check with your licensing specialist to become familiar with the requirements for your location. In my experience, use zones are often designed around commercial play structures more generously than the minimum requirement. If you find this is the case when you measure the use zone around your commercial play structure, you’ve just found a great opportunity:

• That extra space may become a place to plant a small garden, or to place a container garden.

• It might be where you build low, almost ground level platforms where children can build with blocks. (These don’t have to be permanently installed; they can just sit on top of the already existing surface.)

• Or it might become a place where you add a storage bin for loose parts.

Look at the ground plane of your outdoor space (think floor) and see if there are some places that could become ‘something’ with the addition of creative touches. Changes of materials or colors may be possible. This kind of alteration can often be done for little expense and its reversible if you ever have to return the space to its original condition (if you lease space, for example). Here’s an example to get you started:

• Add a few pillows covered with appropriate outdoor fabric and you have a great area for gathering or socialization.

• Add a pot with flowers next to it for a touch of nature.

• If there is room for a low table or shelf, you can even turn it into an area for art exploration.

Now let’s think three-dimensionally, as you consider vertical elements in your space. Review the perimeter of your yard. If it has a fence or wall, consider the possibility of affixing plantings or display panels to it. Some creative over-the-fence storage solutions (sturdy canvas with pockets, for example) are also available. Look up. Where are the tall things? If there is nothing over-head anywhere on site, you will most likely feel uncomfortable; ditto for your children. The inclusion of shade cloth or a simple (very affordable) arbor will define a space, contribute to its thermal comfort, and provide places to hang fabric and other objects. It also provides contrast of light and shade and a reason for a developing child to consider multiple perspectives. This type of addition does not have to be permanent — only sturdy.

Think about the passage of time, a fourth dimension. A child’s concept of time will be different from an adult’s. Different cultures have varying senses of time. Time is an ally in an outdoor space. Child initiated exploration should be allowed adequate time. If you are observing children having difficulty engaging in activities in meaningful ways, perhaps they are not allowed enough time to do so. If a child understands they will be called to go back inside within a short period of time, where is the incentive to do anything other than just run around aimlessly?

Time can also be an ally if the space is confined. Consider how you access the outdoor space. Is it simply through a door in mass exodus? If so, it is unlikely that any purpose will be associated with going outside. If, however there is a bit of ritual attached to the transitioning from interior to exterior space, more meaningful activity will occur in the outside space:

Take an indirect route and notice observations made by the children — or solicit some.
Vary the Route from Time to Time
Consider a brief pause along the way or at the entry to the outdoor space to ask children for their intentions of how they will spend their time outside.

Perhaps offer a provocation that may be associated with what you are trying to achieve in the indoor classroom. I have observed more purposeful play and calmer behavior when educators help children focus in such a way. Calmer, more purposeful behavior makes spaces that may be confined or difficult to transform more impactful and pleasurable to experience for all.

Add the Fun Stuff
Listed are some ideas to get you started:

• Let time be visible by creating simple displays of seasonal objects such as garden produce, flowers, and leaves. Just find a place to add a small table and invite children to continually change the objects on display.

• Think about weather or climate-related prompts. Thermometers placed in shade and sun throughout your site can elicit a discussion about why they may read differently in various locations. Rain gauges can be added to your outside area with little monetary or space demands, and are a great way to bring math and science into conversations with children.

• Adding bird feeders to your space is another great way to spark valuable discussions. Documenting bird sightings has widespread possibilities for science and math discoveries, as well as conversations about the passage of time, bird flight paths, colors, and even rhythm and melody in bird song.

• Experimenting with solar printing, ice sculpture, or painting rocks with water can offer opportunities for awe and wonder while having very modest space requirements.

• Introduce larger cardboard boxes for temporary, but wide-ranging experimentation.

Don’t Forget the Plants
Plant materials transform spaces and they don’t have to take up a lot of room:

• If you cannot plant in the ground, work with various types and sizes of containers. A few large pots with multiple trunked shrubs or ornamental grasses can provide an activity area that takes up not much more room than a bedroom closet. Wonderful experiences with care-taking and understanding life cycles can occur with simple container plantings.

• Raised garden beds can produce abundance in small areas and can work wonders as dividers between boisterous and quieter areas. (For example, they can serve as a barrier that keeps running children from inadvertently knocking over another child’s carefully constructed block creation.) Unplanted containers or raised planter boxes can provide a place for dirt digging or sand play.

• Look at options for vertical gardening to take advantage of walls or fences.

The Child’s Voice
As with all planning, don’t forget to focus on the brilliance of the child. It is easy to get excited and think we have the greatest idea and yet be too prescriptive. Quiz yourself on who is doing the thinking. Are you providing opportunity or are you providing the answer? For example, consult with your children about what types of vegetables or flowers they would like to plant. Look at photos of plants that do well in your area, and encourage children to plan your in-ground or container garden each year.

Really, You Can!
I encourage you to choose some ideas from this article and begin implementing a few at a time. By making one small change after another, you can turn an outdoor space that felt like a difficult challenge into one that is truly a pleasure to be in. Even very limited spaces can be brought to that point. You really can do it.

Source: You Can Do It! Improving Constrained Outdoor Spaces by Jim Wike, Child Care Exchange, September/October 2015
### Fun, Easy & Inexpensive to Make Outdoor Play Ideas

- **Turn your play yard into a private concert hall with this giant xylophone.** [https://au.lifestyle.yahoo.com/better-homes-gardens/diy/h/20266279/how-to-make-a-giant-xylophone/](https://au.lifestyle.yahoo.com/better-homes-gardens/diy/h/20266279/how-to-make-a-giant-xylophone/)


- **Race marbles* down pool noodles (best dollar-store find, ever).** [http://www.spoonful.com](http://www.spoonful.com) (*not appropriate with very young children, of course)*

- **Create a one-of-a-kind ladybug vs. bumble bee tic-tac-toe game.** [http://chickenscratchny.com/2013/04/spring-time-tic-tac-toe.html](http://chickenscratchny.com/2013/04/spring-time-tic-tac-toe.html)

- **Turn your play yard into a private concert hall with this giant xylophone.** [https://au.lifestyle.yahoo.com/better-homes-gardens/diy/h/20266279/how-to-make-a-giant-xylophone/](https://au.lifestyle.yahoo.com/better-homes-gardens/diy/h/20266279/how-to-make-a-giant-xylophone/)

- **Race marbles* down pool noodles (best dollar-store find, ever).** [http://www.spoonful.com](http://www.spoonful.com) (*not appropriate with very young children, of course)*

- **Make an outdoor chalkboard from a 4x8 sheet of plywood and outdoor paint mixed with sanded grout in a color that looks like chalkboard.** [http://www.apartmenttherapy.com/outdoor-chalkboard-reader-proj-124426](http://www.apartmenttherapy.com/outdoor-chalkboard-reader-proj-124426)
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The Child Care Project is a Granite United Way partner agency.