



Dartmouth College Child Care Center Newsletter

July/August 2009

In This Issue:

From the Director pg 1

Teddy One pg 4
Teddy Too pg 5
Pandas pg 6

For "My daddy smells like chicken." See:
Koala pg 7
Woolly pg 8

For "We should stop pumping now." See:
Polar pg 10
Grizzly pg 12

• Welcome, Moya Stevens

Moya joins our capable float pool on August 17. Moya has a BS in Elementary Education from Plymouth State College and several years of experience in child care and kindergarten. Most recently, she has worked as an administrative assistant. She looks forward to getting back into the classroom.

• Fall staff line-up

Teddy One: Cathy Fleming, Wendy Irwin, Keri Wolfe

Teddy Too: Terri Crane (MTW), Lori Higgins, Denise Ayers, Jeanna Roy (ThF)

Pandas: Susan Young, Jenn Boudro, Tatyana Bills

Koalas: Terri Hollis, Debbie Lensing, Tiffany Chapman

Woollies: Deb Girdwood, Barb Merchand, Kristin Ball

Polars: Sunnie McPhetres, Bobbie Lynn Stone, Ray Garcia

Grizzlies: Carol Wilson, Karen Gray

Floater: Gretchen Beisler, Eileen Rum, Moya Stevens

Office: Jeff Robbins, Terry Chase, Amy Potter

Part-time, fall term: Anne Steele, Gladness Msumanje, Jeanna Roy, Sue Hewitt, Claire Giambi, more TBA.

• DCCCC staff grow up together

Congratulations to Carol Wilson who celebrated her 20th year of service at DCCCC!

Farewell to Judy Tompkins, our first retiree, after her 19 years at DCCCC.

Other long-time staff members at DCCCC include:

Jeff Robbins, 25 years

Terri Chase, 22 years (36 years at the College!)

Susan Young, 22 years

Sunnie McPhetres, 22 years (with a hiatus)
Terri Crane, 21 years
Cathy Fleming, 18 years
Jenn Boudro, 18 years
Gretchen Beisler, 14 years
Wendy Irwin, 13 years
Karen Gray, 12 years. And many more working up to their 10th year!

• Important Dates at DCCCC

August 21, Last Day for 2008-09 Grizzlies. Farewell, alumni/ae!
August 24-25, closed to prepare for the new school year
August 26, Move-up Day
September 7, closed for Labor Day

• Paperwork!

Have you returned your 2009-10 paperwork, signed and dated, to the office? Each and every child must have current forms, signed within the last 12 months. No exceptions – the licensor checks!

• Tuition:

Reminder to families leaving this summer: your tuition is due before your child's last day.

• Bike Parade

Wednesday, August 12, 10:30 am, in the DCCCC driveway Raindate: August 13
No decorations necessary, just fun!

• Community Events for Families (Monitor the DCCCC BlitzBulletin for more events)

- **Brownstock**, an event for all ages. Sunday, August 9, 2009, noon to 8:00 PM.
- **40th Anniversary Celebration of WOODSTOCK** featuring the music of local artists! Ascutney Mountain Resort Base Lodge, Brownsville VT.
Rain (indoors) or shine (outdoors). Adults \$10, Children \$5
Beer, wine, soft drinks and food for sale. Performances by several bands, musicians and surprise guests. A Benefit for: Special Needs Support Center in Lebanon, NH.

• Dear Big Jeff,

Why are my children so cranky this summer?
Signed, Trying to be Jolly

• Dear Jolly,

There are a number of possibilities:
a. Them – It's a stage

- You – Hang tight. Stay positive. Hold to your standards for appropriate behavior.
 Change the subject or the activity when enough is enough.
- b. Them – They're tired.
 You – Make sure they are getting enough rest. Staying up later and bending the schedule in the summer is great fun, but if it leaves your child too tired to cope, create a new schedule that permits enough sleep and time for quiet play.
 - c. Them – Important people are missing e.g. siblings away at camp; friends and teachers are in and out for vacations.
 You – Acknowledge the changes. Explain that friends, siblings and teachers will be back. Create as much consistency as you can. Do some thing fun with your child.
 - d. Them – Vacation means change, however much fun it may be.
 You – Have realistic expectations. Plan vacation experiences at a pace that your child can enjoy. Bring some comfort items from home like stuffies or favorite books and toys. Stick to a little bit of a routine. Don't forget to read stories and snuggle.
 - e. Them – Not sure.
 You – Ask your child's teacher!
 Enjoy the summer. Enjoy the changes. Enjoy each other,
 Big Jeff

• Dear Big Jeff,

My child is anxious about changing classes. She wants to be a Panda forever.
 Signed, I'm Trying Not to Worry

• Dear Worried,

You're absolutely right. Don't worry. Your confidence in your child's capacity to make this change is paramount. Help yourself feel better by visiting the new classroom and chatting with the teachers. Learn about the fun new things your child will experience. When you are looking forward to the new experience and celebrating your child's growth, it will rub off.

Stop by and visit the classroom with your child. Take a picture to refer to later. Notice a few fun things your child will enjoy. While you are staying positive, don't ignore your child's anxiety. You might say something like, "Change can be hard. We'll miss your old teachers." Pause there for a moment. Your child may or may not comment. When you have both respected how this feels you can add positive comments like:

"It will be fun to move up with (insert friend's name)," or
 "It will be so cool when you get to go on the big playground every morning!" or
 "You'll get to take your stuffie, just like in the Panda room," or
 "I'm going to talk with your new teacher. Is there any thing you'd like me to ask?"

This WILL be so cool,
 Big Jeff

News from Teddy One

Cathy Flemming,
Coordinator
Infant/Toddler
Program

Wendy Irwin,
Teacher

Keri Wolfe,
Assistant Teacher

Hello Teddy One parents,

It is that time of year when I love to recap this past year and then sit back and just wonder at how fast these beautiful children grow! And what a crazy year it has been, at least for me. What? It's not all about me?? Well, be prepared, this newsletter pretty much is!

I was worried that coming back in December was going to be tricky for everyone. We all settled in more quickly than I thought we would, and even though I enjoyed my student teaching stint, it felt good to be back "home." My job will soon change, again, but until then I am a full-on Teddy. I continue to feel fortunate that my days are filled with your child's growth. Going down my new path to public school teaching will not be easy because it entails leaving here. When I say "home" I truly mean it. DCCCC had been my second home for almost 19 years. It will not be easy to cut those apron strings. In the new year, I will be going part time so that I can find subbing position to get my foot in a school's door. Once we find a Lead Teacher to replace me, I will begin my new position as Co-Lead

Teacher with Terri Crane. It will be a new transition for all of us, but once again, I am lucky to be here with the most wonderful group of coworkers ever. I am being given the chance to ease out slowly and I am grateful for that. Now, Denise and Lori may have me duct taped up before then, but really, I know they love me, too!

I am serious when I say that I have been so lucky to have the opportunity to work with the greatest child care providers ever, not only in the Teddy rooms, but throughout the Center. The teachers and office staff, Jeff included (and I cannot leave Susan Lloyd out), have been there through it all with me and I am going to miss everyone. This does not exclude families. We have all become so close through our experiences here. DCCCC is not only a place for children to grow, but for the adults as well. As many of you know, we have helpers here throughout the year who are DCCCC alums and many of whom I had as Teddies. They come back! Now *that* is amazing!

It is said that change is good and I feel that the Teddies are ready for it. We have begun by welcoming Keri Wolfe as the Teddy One Assistant Teacher. Keri is still getting her feet wet, but we are excited to have her new energy and ideas. She will be starting the new year with Wendy, the new group and Tejasi, Aidan, and Grace. I know Keri will put her whole self into making the Teddy One room continue to run as smoothly as ever!

I am also glad that I can once again watch the older Teddies - Ethan, William, David, Avery, Mya, Eliza, and Heitor - make the huge leap to their new classrooms. They are ready and will have so much fun. We have begun the visits to the Koala and Panda rooms and will do more through August. The children are loving their time in the rooms. So many new fun and exciting things to do! Please continue to walk through your child's new room as often as possible and if you have time, stay and play. It really does make the transition go more smoothly! We will be planning a picnic toward the end of August for all of the Teddy families. We'll let you know the date. It has been a wonderful year.

So, this being my last newsletter as a Teddy One, I want to thank all of you, the families and my coworkers, for helping to enrich my life. It is an experience that has shaped me to be the person I am today - someone who loves children and will have them as a part of my life forever!

Love,
Cathy

News from Teddy Too

Terri Crane,
Lead Teacher

Lori Higgins,
Teacher

Denise Ayres,
Assistant Teacher

Dear Teddy Too families,

It's time to say goodbye to this group of Teddies. We will miss all of you who will be moving on to the Panda and Koala rooms. Your children have grown so much over the past year. We've enjoyed helping them learn how to walk, talk, run, jump with two feet, dance, sing and make friends.

The Teddies language skills have exploded from the babbling babies to the full sentence speaking story-telling toddlers. We can now understand more than half of the stories they tell us. We don't have to pretend to understand! Have you heard Natalie tell a knock-knock joke? Very funny stuff! I think she may be the first Teddy to pull off a knock-knock joke in the history of the Teddy room!

This has also been a very musical group. They enjoyed music class with Brooke through May and have been making their own music ever since. The gazebo has become a music hall of sorts. It's like open mike night when we get out there. It starts with one or two who clamber on to the benches in the gazebo saying sing, sing. Any one of them, at any given time, will break into song which then is an invitation for anyone else to join in. As the singing starts the crowd gets larger. The crowd favorites have been "Hello everybody so glad to see you," "Baby Beluga" and "ABC's" - although no song is off limit really.

They went from crawling babies to these big running, climbing, and jumping big kids. They have these new strong bodies that they like to try out by climbing onto tables and standing in chairs or on window sills. The whole time they're climbing they're looking at us like – *what, we just learned to do this and we have to practice all the time!* I don't think so!

We know that the summer always brings us big kids who are ready to move up. We know they are ready to be challenged and to try new things. We, on the other hand, are not ready to let them go. They have endeared themselves to us and we will never forget the time we have spent together. We wish everyone a happy transition! But, if things fall apart remember that's all part of the plan. It happens even if we think it won't. They will only look big until they hit the Panda/Koala room and then they'll look really small and you'll want to scoop them up and bring them back into the Teddy room. Oh wait! That's usually what the Teddy teachers want to do. Well you might want to do it too, but really everyone will be fine. Luckily we get to hold onto a couple of Teddies for another year.

Thank you for sharing your children with us. We will miss you all and do hope that when the dust settles you will come and visit the Teddies once in a while.

Fondly,
Terri and the Teddy Too teachers

News from the Pandas

Susan Quimby,
Lead Teacher

Jenn Boudro,
Teacher

Sheri Adams,
Assistant Teacher

It can't be. It just can't be!! Your children are entering their last month of Pandahood. Or maybe have just finished. This year has flown by. It is always amazing to me how much growth has occurred in one short year. But then again, almost all of your children have literally spent about a third of their daycare lives in the Panda room!!

Let's think back at this time last year. Your child was mostly likely saying some words. Some were starting to make up sentences. AND NOW listen to them. They are speaking in full sentences, full of descriptive language. They easily tell their renditions of what's going on. They share stories from home and about their families. They are working at putting their feelings and emotions into words as they advance into cooperative play with their peers. There are some children who thrive on organizing play and including others. I can hear their play and conversations expand daily. It is an amazing thing to observe!

NOW! About their humor! What a bunch of gigglers! I hear laughs all over the room and playground. It's infectious, for sure. I find myself laughing out loud right along with them. I have so enjoyed having your child this year - each and every single child has made my life better!

We sadly say goodbye to Sheri toward the end of August. It's been fun having her as part of the Panda team this year and we wish her all the best. We welcome Tatyana as she joins the Panda team permanently Beginning august 17th. We expect a great fun-filled year ahead!

A few reminders:

- We hope you are taking a few extra minutes to stroll through the other end of the building to acclimate your child to their soon-to-be new classroom and chat with the teachers.

- CORN HUSKING PARTY WITH THE GRIZZLIES! Date to be announced. We will be having a special snack with the Grizzlies sometime in August when the local corn is in. They are going to teach the Pandas all about husking corn and then we'll have a big old corn on the cob snack together! Maybe we'll even make corn husks dolls.

- Please join us for our FAMILY END OF THE YEAR SNACK: August 19th at 4:00.

I want to thank you all so much for giving us the opportunity to get to know your children. We love them so and will miss you all as well. Stop on down ANY TIME!!!!

So very fondly,
Susan for the Panda team

News from the Koalas

Terri Hollis,
Lead Teacher

Jillian Andrew,
Teacher

Tiffany Chapman,
Assistant Teacher

Greetings Koala Families,

Well here we are again - the last newsletter of the year. It would be stating the obvious to say that there are so many ways in which teachers have enjoyed your children. A favorite, however, was to Laugh Out Loud about the things they said. So in keeping with a Koala tradition, the following is a review of just that...

- “My daddy smells like chicken.”
- “Last night when I was on my elephant, it roared at me.”
- “My leggings match the yogurt we are having for snack.”
- “I don’t have to clean up because it’s my birthday today.”
- “If we have three Koalas in the bathroom one of them will need to use the sink for a potty.”
- “It smells cold out.”
- “My pee is yellow like lemons.”
- “I can’t wait to get older, because then I can have hair on my shoulders.”
- “Did you know I live next to my neighbors?”
- “My grandma has veins!”
- “Did you know making a baby is a lot of work?”
- “I am super girl and I am going to save all womans.”
- “I’ll be going on my break soon.”
- “I’m really clever because when I grow up I am going to be a firefighter.”
- “My daddy ate all of my gummy bears.”
- “When I grow up I want to be a big boy.”
- “If you eat boogers you will have green trees grow in your belly.”
- “Hey my cheese matches my hair.”
- “I couldn’t paint Daddy’s finger because he has fuzzy fingers...”
- “I went to the hair store and got my hair cut.”
- “Don’t god bless you on me!”(child sneezed on another child)
- “Before I had teeth I was allowed to jump on my bed.”
- “You don’t need to worry about getting sick or dying until you get old.”
- “Mom told me when teenagers do bad things they go to jail.”
- “I’m allergic to pigs, when I get near them they poop on me.”

The Koala Teachers hope you enjoyed these quotes as much as we did.

Fondly,
Terri Hollis

News from the Woolly Bears

Judy Tompkins,
Lead Teacher

Barb Merchand,
Teacher

Kristin Ball,
Assistant Teacher

Tick, Tock goes the Woolly Bear clock.
It's winding slowly down to the end.
Soon it will be time to begin again.
As old friends leave and new friends come.

This is the time of the year when we like to think about the children who will leave the Woolly Bear room by the end of the summer and what we will remember and miss the most about them. So, here is our list for the 2008-2009 Woolly Bear year.

Matthew: He likes to find out how things work. He is an investigator who likes to be on the move. He loves the Magna Tiles and all materials involved with building and constructing. He is an expert with a snow or sand shovel. When a child asks, "Can I join your play?" Matthew replies, "Sure!"

Riley: She is a nature lover. She can spend a long time watching polliwogs or a little tiny insect. She loves to visit the Teddy Room to see her sister. She loves to help clean the room. She likes to spend time with the afternoon helping teachers. She loves drawing, story writing, acting and her puppy stuffie. She can sing out songs from the musical *Annie*.

Mia: She is a show girl who loves to act out stories, dance and sing. She loved music class and always participated fully. She loves to swirl and twirl her skirts. She enjoyed the fairy dresses and shoebox family house. She enjoys drawing, writing and math, too.

Natalie: She loves to giggle and have fun. She is a people person and enjoyed being with her friends in the Woolly Bear tree house. She performed amazing gymnastic tricks on the bar and on the trapeze, too. She enjoyed sledding down the big hill in the winter and playing under the sprinkler in the summer sun. She likes baking projects and her favorite lunch is refried beans and nachos.

Zoey: She loves to play baby. Sometimes she likes to pretend to be the baby and other times she likes to play with babies. Naturally, she loves to visit the Teddy Room to see the babies and her momma, too. She knows all about the center and loves to visit around. She is "Little Miss Sunshine." She also enjoys playing with toy puppies and kitties.

Dexter: He is a fun loving boy with a great sense of humor. He is very social and loves to be with his friends. He is not afraid to get dirty and really gets into his mud, sand and water play. However, he also likes to help clean the room with a spray bottle of water or wash the dishes. He often comes to the room dressed in one of his favorite hero costumes. He loves to act out stories.

Alix: She is a delightful, easy going girl. Alix really loves to be with her friends. If a friend forgets something and she has it in her cubby, Alix will lend it. She is very caring and gentle with her friends. She is independent and likes to dress herself in creative outfits. She loves to play ice cream shop under the new climber. She always wants sprinkle cheese on her Annie's pasta at lunchtime.

Zane: He loves to tell stories with many details. He enjoys brainstorming ideas for projects and does it with much excitement while hopping around. It is hard for him to contain all of his great ideas. He likes to use props for dramatic play and he also comes up with creative prop designs of his own. He collaborates well with friends to make props. He designed the pulley for the tree house to use for room service. He is the chef on the playground and prepares very elaborate and exotic dishes. He likes to go to the WB woods and pretend to fish in the canoe.

Lily: She is a sensible planner and organizer and able to give detailed explanations for her plans and ideas. We often hear her preface a thought with “I have an idea!” She can wait patiently for her turn and can be thoughtful and kind. Lily sees the “big picture.” She is a bit of a city girl and likes to go to the Big Apple and Chicago. She loves having her dad come in for lunch and was thrilled when her mom came to share time with us during the Rescue Center unit. This summer she loves to wear her bath suit or have a giggle time while pulling a friend in the wagon outside.

Lindsay: She has one of the brightest smiles and greatest giggles in the world. Her laugh just rolls out of her and it is contagious. She loves to be with her friends and participate in dramatic play. She adores purses, jewelry, rings and girly things. She has collected many paper cups full of treasures and sparkles from the playground. She loves to swing and she can do amazing gymnastics. She likes to draw, write and read books. She is a super actress for acting out stories.

Shantel: She is kind and caring. She is a quiet observer, but once she feels comfortable she can let go and really get into her play with friends. She loves fancy clothes and pretty hair clips. She enjoys practicing her math by counting, adding and subtracting. She loves to swing and can pump really high. She enjoys messy play in the sand and the water this summer. Last winter she liked to make snow cakes. She likes giggle wagon rides, too. She enjoys playing with the big boys because she loves her big brother Justin so much. Shantel wants to be a Grizzly like Justin!

We wish all of these children and their families success and happiness as they take the giant leap from the Woolly Bear room to kindergarten. We know they will all do great.

After August 21st Nell, Ashley, Lia, Liam, Cameron, Natalia and Kate will become the old kids in the room as they have another year as Woollies before going off to kindergarten. They will be joined by the new Woolly kids Aiden, Audrey, Mateo, Stella, Sebastian, Emilia, Ella, Andrew, Delia and Kerem. The new Woolly Bear children and teaching team will begin a yearlong journey of adventures beginning on August, 24th and I know it will be a fantastic year.

It is hard to believe that this is my last newsletter for the Woolly Bears. It has been an incredible almost nineteen years for me at DCCCC. I have worked with some wonderful children and families and they have taught me so much about children, teaching and life in general. I had the opportunity to work with some amazing teachers over the years and they have taught me a great deal about how children learn best. Jeff and Susan Lloyd have always been here to support me and guide me with their vast knowledge of how to help children grow and support families. I am very grateful for all of the many blessings I have received over my past years while teaching at DCCCC.

I will take many wonderful memories of children with me as I go off to different adventures in my new home in Massachusetts. However this year’s children and families will always hold a special place in my heart as my last Woolly Bear group.

Thanks to all of you, Judy and the Woolly Bear Team

News from the Polar Bears

Sunnie McPhetres,
Lead Teacher

Bobbie Lynn Stone,
Teacher

Radoyka Garcia,
Assistant Teacher

Welcome to the last newsletter of the 2008-2009 year! We are going to be having many sad moments over the next few weeks as we say good-bye to children moving on. It seems like only yesterday that I was saying hello to everyone. There is quite a list of children moving on to kindergarten – we will miss them all. This is the time of year that I most enjoy having a multi-aged classroom because I don't have to say good-bye to everyone at once! I am very happy that some of the Polar Bears will be staying for another fun-filled year.

I've been getting "good-bye books" ready for the children who will be leaving and looking at their faces from two years ago amazes me; they have grown so much! Even though the kids are looking forward to the changes ahead, they are still a bit sad to be leaving the Polar Room behind. I am thankful for such a wonderful year together as a "childcare family." I will cherish the memories always!

Another thing that happens at this time of year is more and more outside time. Someone recently said that gross motor development is the most important aspect of being outside. After thinking about it for a bit, I started taking notes about things that were happening while children played outside and how the goals and objectives of the Creative Curriculum related to the activities. I found that many areas of development were being strengthened. I'd like to share some of my observations with you. The next time that you are playing at the playground or riding bikes with your child, think about the amazing total experience that they are receiving!

-Objective 1. Shows ability to adjust to new situations. The Polars were playing happily on the playground with no other classes present. They moved around the playground and used many different areas. They were joined by the Grizzlies and readily shared the playground and invited Grizzlies to join sand activities.

-Objective 6. Takes responsibility for own well-being. A Polar on the tire swing said, "That's high enough for us; we should stop pumping now."

-Objective 8. Follows classroom routines. The Polars in the sandbox who wanted to remove their shoes placed their shoes in the appropriate crate. When ready to leave the sand area, they put their shoes back on without reminder.

-Objective 10. Plays well with other children. Five children worked together in the sand area. They communicated with one another about what they were doing – making a sand moving machine. They experimented with the placement of tubes and gutters, watched each other and make suggestions.

-Objective 11. Recognizes the feelings of others and responds appropriately. A Polar remarked, "She just let him have a drink during her turn!"

-Objective 13. Uses thinking skills to resolve conflicts. Children at the water fountain showed impatience with waiting for a turn by moving their bodies close together and beginning to push gently with their bodies. One child said, "I know, two people can take a turn – one on the top of the water and one under!" They tried the idea and were successful.

-Objective 19. Controls small muscles in hands. Several children found a worm in the grass. They built a small house for the worm using leaves and small sticks. They snapped the sticks to the needed lengths and placed them in desired locations.

-Objective 22. Observes objects and events with curiosity. A Polar noticed the bark on a tree. The Polar felt the bark and asked, “What is that?” The Polar looked higher on the tree and noticed a spot with no bark and wondered what will happen to the tree.

-Objective 24. Shows persistence in approaching tasks. The Polars decided to turn their sand mover into a water mover. They had to decide how to get water to their machine. Several children volunteered to carry water from the water fountain on the other side of the playground. The bucket carrying continued for about 20 minutes with a variety of children participating. They took rests and then returned to the task.

-Objective 25. Explores cause and effect. Several Polars created a pathway of mud pies. They experimented with the ratio of water to sand needed to produce the consistency that they desired.

-Objective 27. Classifies objects. One Polar collected a variety of stones and sticks. The child sorted the objects by type and color.

-Objective 28. Compares/measures. Two children were making sand pizza in the kitchen area of the playground. They discussed how much sand would be needed. They used words such as two scoops, more than, less than, too much, not enough, and enough.

-Objective 30. Recognizes patterns and can repeat them. A Polar said, “Look! There’s no one on that swing, someone on that swing, no one on that swing, and someone on that one! It’s like a pattern!”

-Objective 31. Shows awareness of time concepts and sequence. When asked, “When will this machine be finished?” a Polar responded, “A long time, maybe tomorrow.”

-Objective 34. Uses numbers and counting. Several children decided to play hide-and-seek. They took turns being the counter and counted out loud to ten.

-Objective 35. Takes on pretend roles and situations. A Polar, riding on a bike, said, “I’m the bus driver! I have to pick up the kids and take them to school!”

-Objective 36. Makes believe with objects. Children used road cones to be buckets, hats, and packages.

-Objective 38. Hears and discriminates the sounds of language. A Polar on the swing said, “Sunnie! That rhymes with bunny and funny!”

-Objective 39. Expresses self, using words and expanded sentences. Children were talking and communicating constantly.

-Objective 45. Demonstrates understanding of print concepts. Polars stood near the sign by the climbing structure and asked, “What does this say?”

-Objective 49. Understands the purpose of writing. Two Polars said, “Can we write a ‘save’ sign for this?”

-Objective 50. Writes letters and words. The children retrieved paper and markers and wrote the dictated letters of PLEASE SAVE.

I could have easily filled in the other 28 objectives (five of which are indeed gross motor skills), but I think you get the picture. Aren’t we lucky to have such a rich learning environment right in our own back yard.

I will end by thanking you all for sharing this year with us. We enjoy your children and we enjoy you. We have loved being able to chat with you each day, have you sit down and read a story or play a game or cook something special with us. We really appreciate the trust that you have placed in us. Thank you! - Sunnie and the Polar team

News from the Grizzlies

Carolynn Wilson,
Lead Teacher

Karen Gray,
Teacher

It's been almost an entire year that we've been together with most of these Grizzlies, and what a year it has been!

Last **July**, we began our first visits from Polars and Woollies who would be moving up. Children often came in pairs for short, frequent visits.

August was the month our new-to-DCCCC friends started to visit, as we had intake meetings with their parents. Then, on Monday, August 25, 2008, at 7:30am, our time together as Grizzlies officially began. There were two days of getting familiar with the room before Ray School Kindergarten began on Wednesday, August 27th. We remember lots of exploring around the room during those first few days, as children discovered all the “cool new stuff” in their Grizzly Room, like Legos, dress up clothes, and the marble track. We measured heights and began the routine of washing our hands “for at least three birds.”

In **September**, we began to establish our regular routine, and children saw that, among other things, there were lists to help us keep track of whom we picked up every day from Ray School; who was the line leader; whose day it was to have rest in the loft and in the quiet space; who had turns visiting and helping in other classrooms; and who was in the green or red or blue group for the multi. We observed caterpillars turn into monarch butterflies, learning that male monarchs have spots on their lower wings but the females do not. We picked giant beans in the garden. We played board games, guessing games, and tag games. A colorful name and photo crossword puzzle decorated the hallway as we got acquainted with one another and worked on letter recognition. We celebrated Lucy’s birthday, and that of our student assistant, David Jackson. We also welcomed three new children to Grizzlies: Jona, Wasa, and Bruno.

By **October**, things were really beginning to look like autumn, as we “adopted” two trees in the Grizzly yard, observed their changes, and learned some facts about leaves and trees. Dogs and puppies were popular themes in the children’s play for a time, and we read quite a few dog stories, including The True Story of Balto. We built forts; we raked leaves into piles for jumping into; and we spent many afternoons hunting for the tiny sparkly treasures left on the playground by the fairies...or was it the teachers? As the end of the month approached, we enjoyed thinking about Halloween: discussing our costumes, making decorations, learning about spiders, reading spooky stories, talking about things that made us afraid, and playing “mystery word” games. Our eighth grade volunteer, Oren Wilcox, artist extraordinaire, joined us on Tuesday afternoons. We had the first wiggly tooth fall out in the Grizzly room (actually, on the playground), and we celebrated the birthdays of Max and William.

November brought shorter days with the time change and more and more time indoors. We did many activities focused on night time, nocturnal animals, planets and stars. The children were growing increasingly comfortable in the room, and it was great to see them create and discover on their own in a variety of unique ways. Some children used paper and tape; some drew and made books and games; some combined a mix of art media; some dressed up and pretended; some built with Legos, Magna Tiles, or the train set; some told stories. The multi was very popular, and the Grizzlies enjoyed playing there so much that “Having a long multi time as a whole

group (including a maze set up, lunch, and activities)” was the top vote-getter in the Grizzly election on that historic November 4th when the USA elected our first African American president. Birthday celebrations were for Oren, Elizabeth, and Karen, and we were happy to have the Thanksgiving holiday.

The few weeks we were together in **December** saw the arrival of our first snowflakes and in our cubbies, all the gear needed to be comfortable outdoors in the New England winter. We had our first snow day, and we got the sleds out on the sledding hill. We listened to “The Nutcracker Suite,” danced, and began gift-making for the holidays. Penguins were another interest, and we enjoyed a number of books with that wonderful character, Tacky the Penguin. Carol met with parents for conferences. Our artwork was on display at the Howe Library. We welcomed Erin Wetherell as the teacher who would substitute while Karen was on maternity leave. We celebrated Jack’s birthday; we said goodbye to Jona; and we all received an extra day off from the College on December 24th.

We came back together in **January** after a nice break. Even Karen returned, but not for long! After working a full, active day on January 8th, Karen gave birth to a beautiful boy, Joshua Edmund Gray at 8:41pm. January was indeed a month for celebrations as we marked the birthdays of Hank, Cailie, Wasa, Lydia, Alice and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the inauguration of President Obama, the beginning of 2009, and our 100th day of Grizzlies. We had a handmade card sale to raise funds for The Haven. We enjoyed playing outdoors in the snow, especially sledding and snow sculpting. Indoors, we spent lots of cozy time, reading together, pretending together, working on art projects and fantastic Lego structures. We introduced our big teaching clock, as a number of children were very interested in learning to tell time. Later in the month, we marked the beginning of the Year of the Ox, including creating a beautiful dragon to bring us good luck.

The afternoons were growing visibly longer in **February**, making our daily outside excursions all the more fun. We planted some paper white bulbs to further our anticipation of spring. We began work on a big project as each child made a Valentine’s Day card for each other child in the Grizzlies. This took several weeks, doing a little each day, but we enjoyed both the process and the products, along with strawberry ice cream and Oreos for a special snack. We had a week of vacation, and many children took advantage of the opportunity to wear their pajamas to Grizzlies on “any day we have an all-day Grizzly day.” Together, we learned about some US Presidents, particularly Abraham Lincoln and George Washington, and we found what coins have their images. We estimated how many pennies were in the discovery table. February birthdays included the Grizzlies, Kate, Cassidy, and Cailie’s newborn sisters Maeve and Anna, who arrived on February 18th. We also welcomed a new Grizzly friend, Hopie.

March started off with Dr. Seuss’s birthday, so we can’t let it pass without a kind of read-a-thon of his many stories, some of which the Grizzlies read to us! In addition to their imaginative themes, these stories provide us with many examples of rhyming and wordplay, and we took this opportunity to imaginatively play with words ourselves. About this time, talk and interest in all things Star Wars became almost a passion for one group of friends. Although not everyone shared that excitement, there was renewed interest in learning about space, stars, and the solar system. Our snowy playground lent itself to our pretending to be on “another planet,” and so did some of

the crazy art activities we tried, like painting with bubble wrap and playing with Floam. Our dramatic play and block areas, as well as the multi, were frequently being transformed into “spaceships.” Children studied the big poster of space, and enjoyed hearing some of the myths and legends about the constellations. Each child made his or her own large poster depiction of themselves in space which we proudly displayed in the hall. We enjoyed the tricks of leprechauns, who turned our Kixx cereal into rainbow colors. We anticipated the arrival of spring by planting a number of amaryllis bulbs that Eileen had donated, and we celebrated the birthdays of Kara, Jonathan, Hopie, Minnue, and Carol. We also said goodbye to Bruno, who was moving back to Chile, and to Junji, who was moving back to Japan. Cailie left this month as well, but we knew she would be back in the summer.

By **April**, mild weather had arrived and rain with it, but we enjoyed playing in the mud. New interests were emerging as Grizzlies discovered more strength and coordination, and we began learning to jump rope. We started seeds for our garden, and as the weather warmed and dried things out, we spent as much time as we could outdoors, despite having much of the playground closed as the new play superstructure was being built. We also started building fairy houses. We were happy to have Karen back with us and we held a special parent snack celebration in her return. She so admired how much everyone had grown, and with her return, she brought many new games to challenge and stretch our thinking. Toward the end of April vacation week, the new playground was ready and the weather cooperated with beautiful days to enjoy it. We worked with Eileen on the worm and compost project. The sleds were finally put away and the bikes returned. Our hottest day of 2009 (as of this writing) was on April 27th when the temperature soared into the 80s, so we took many water breaks and squirted each other with spray bottles. We were fortunate to meet Claire Galya at the end of this month and she spent many afternoons helping out in the Grizzly room for the spring term and summer terms.

May began with our student assistant, David Jackson, along with his fraternity brothers from Lambda Upsilon Lambda and sorority sisters from Sigma Lambda Upsilon, hosting a Cinco de Mayo celebration which included a story, learning Spanish words, music, snacks, and a piñata. There was also a spontaneous step dance performance by the LUL brothers. We also had an interactive performance by the Richmond School’s Playback Theater. We made Mother’s Day gifts and other springtime crafts, including the mini mosaics made with beads in jar lids. We started planting our seedlings in the garden and snacking on fresh chives. Two strong interests were present through the month: Star Wars and fairies, with some of the children seeing for themselves how these might overlap. More and more, the Grizzlies were imaginative and creating their own projects, games, and activities that reflected their own experiences and learning. “The Quechee Gorge” appeared in the sandbox one day. On another day, Lego wheels were rolled into block tunnels of varied values with the amount totaled after five rolls, and a kind of bowling was created from paper towel tubes and newspaper balls. The rainy season started in May, and it seemed that when we weren’t playing outdoors in the rain and what had become something like quicksand in the sandbox, we were indoors folding dozens and dozens of “cootie-catchers” or fortune tellers as they were also known. We said goodbye to our friend Cassidy at the end of May and we welcomed Eugenie, Alice’s sister, born on May 31st. We also had DCCCC’s 25th anniversary party on May 31st.

June brought the busy activities with the end of the school year, both here at Grizzlies with our parent conferences, and at the various kindergartens with plays, performances, and get-togethers. We had our last few days with Erin, which included many requests for her stories or to join in a group game outdoors. We also celebrated her birthday with pizza and popsicles. Lots of caring for our babies and pretend family play took place after the birth of several babies this winter and spring. Throughout the year the children have enjoyed the math and literacy challenges presented at our gatherings, like graphing, unscrambling words, making word families, and playing "Ladybug Adventure" or "Elefun," but it was in their free play time that their energy, creativity, and ideas really took off. By this time of the year, they have become a community of strongly independent and self-directed individuals who are cooperative, good friends. But we had to say our goodbyes to Oren, Max, Alice, and our student assistant, Nida, as well as having our last day of kindergarten and saying goodbye to friends and teachers at school. Ben turned 6 this month.

But now **Summer Grizzlies** has started, and we are happy to have Cailie back, as well as our new Grizzlies, Molly, Dylan M., Dylan K., Ian and Marian. Our summer chain hangs in our room with a link to represent each day remaining. Many friends are coming and going while enjoying vacations and taking trips. We are revisiting many of our favorite activities from the year, observing lots of growth in our garden and beginning to pick vegetables, and spending a great amount of time outdoors. Lots of chase games have been played in addition to sand and water play, parachute play, setting up markets, performing tricks on the chin-up bars and swing poles, having dance parties, and practicing riding the two-wheeled bicycles. Grizzlies continue to work on many of their literacy and math skills during task time and we have created several class books. They have also enjoyed relaxing to chapter books being read. We have been attending swimming lessons on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Storrs pool with Missie. All the children have made great progress and are thrilled to get picks from "the magic shoebox." Picnicking has been delightful whenever possible. We were fortunate to have a visit from Claire's boyfriend, AJ, whom graciously created balloon animals, flowers, and crazy hats for us all. A tent was set up in the room to play and relax in, and board games and card games have become popular - particularly UNO, Secret Door, Rush Hour, Shut the Box, and Up the River. Astro's birthday was celebrated in July and the birthdays for the month of August include Nika's and two of our teachers, Claire and Sue. As the soon-to-be Grizzlies now enter our room for visits, the group has been so helpful and understanding as they recall their first experiences and exposure to the Grizzlies only one year ago.

A whole year in a few paragraphs is just a glimpse, we know, of this brief and important time. These children are growing into the people they will become, and we hope it is with a foundation of belief in themselves and respect for others. Through play, they have learned so much about themselves and others and how to get along. We hope that each child has felt welcomed and thrived while they were a Grizzly, whether their style of learning was introverted or extroverted or some combination of the two. And we deeply appreciate the support we have received from you, our Grizzly families, and the secure, loving homes - and sacrifices - you make for your children.

You'll be hearing from us for the 2008-2009 Grizzly Reunion!

With all the very best,
Carol and Karen