As this program year comes to a close I thought it would be good to review this year’s journey. At the top of my list was moving some class-rooms to new locations in order to insure that the developmental needs of some of our youngest children could be met, which also brought the added benefit of increasing enrollment for children under 6 months. Although this change was not without challenges, for all the new parents and children who were added, it was very good news! This also created a much more robust enrollment and with increased budgetary oversight we were able to end the year in a more healthy fiscal condition!

Having all the toddlers in the Annex has created an opportunity for the two rooms to share resources and collaborate on the playground. Both classrooms of children have really bonded with each other and look forward to seeing each other on the playground.

We are very happy with the many building repairs and updates which includes: new paint and curtains in Inventors (school age), new doors and windows for Dreamers (infants), covers for all the sandboxes, room darkening shades for Builders and Explorers, new paint and carpet in the Commons and increased security of the Annex gate. We also moved the kindergarten children to Inventors (school age) this year and though it seemed a bit scary at first for them, they really have fit into this group and enjoy being with the older school age children.

We are inching closer and closer to meeting all the state requirements for child care licensure! Facilities recently informed me that there is adequate funding to install the fire sprinkler suppression system throughout the building this summer. That should be the final major building work needed to meet state licensing standards. There will be some minor dust and disruption during the project, however, we had lots of experience with that in December when the pipes broke and the water flowed!

And finally, as I write, the Facilities and Grounds crews are overseeing a renovation project on our Dreamers playground along Columbia St. We will have a safer and larger area for the babies to toddle around as well as some natural playscape to provide interesting colors and textures.

What a busy year! Lots of good things are always happening, not the least of these is your child’s growth & development! Thanks for being part of the Olum family!

Please Welcome Our New Staff Members

Jeanea Shipley is our new office specialist that most of us think of as a “receptionist”. She does so much more than that! If you haven’t already introduced yourself and your children to her, please take a moment to do so as she is eager to learn everyone’s names. Jeanea began working in May and is picking up on all the details of this job very quickly so don’t hesitate to ask her for assistance.

We also have a new teacher assistant in Dreamers (babies) and she is probably a familiar face to many of you: Kaitlyn Mariner! Kaitlyn needs one more class to officially graduate in Communications Disorder from the Univ. of Oregon. She has worked for VOCDC for over 3 years and loves babies and all the benchmarks of the first year of development. Stop by and congratulate her if you have a moment.
Karen Logvin, Director of Work-Life Resources, and Carol Snead would like to thank all of the parents who served on our Advisory Council this year: Kelley Porter (staff member), Ken Kato (father of an Explorer and Builder), Helen Chu (mother of an Explorer and Dreamer), Cari Vanderkar-Moore (mother of an Adventurer), Xuesong Hu (father of a Pathfinder), Jeralyn Beghetto (mother of an Explorer), Jane Brubaker (mother of an Inventor), and Rhonda Ehlers (mother of a Pathfinder). We so appreciate their support in many of our “family-focused” events this year as well as their input and opinions concerning building and program topics. We had our last meeting of the program year in June and it’s not too soon for you to start thinking about whether you would like to be part of the Council next year. Our meeting schedule is very flexible and we design it to meet the availability of the parents. This summer we plan to have some informal meetings and communication with current members to examine the role of the Council, how we can best use our meetings, use of alternative communications strategies, etc. If you are interested in being part of this summer dialog, please email Carol at snead@uoregon.edu so your name can be added to the email list.

On behalf of our graduating students staff, thank you for the fantastic turn out for our graduate celebration on June 8th! We had over 120 staff, students, parents and children at this event and it was a wonderful time of food and fellowship as well as an opportunity to show our appreciation and congratulations to our students who graduated. “Thank you” Dev Sinha for organizing some outdoor activities for the children. This is the second year that we have had this event at the Many Nations Long House during finals week. Any constructive feedback about this event is appreciated. Most of what we heard was very positive but we can always refine our events to make them as family and student friendly as possible. We had 20 of our students graduate this June and their names and photos can be viewed on the bulletin board in the Commons.

Inventors (School Age) Gardening Curriculum

A lot of growth is happening in the Inventors classroom and I don’t just mean the children! Through donations and some program funds, we were able to purchase the 4-tiered grow unit and it has been put to good use. Even though it is currently stationed in the Inventors room, all the other classrooms are encouraged to bring their seeds and starts. Lots of flowers and vegetables have been and continue to be grown and when ready, the starts are put into planters on the playgrounds as well as in and around our building. The Summer By the Week theme for June 28th is “Ready, Set, Grow!” and our Inventors will be doing some gardening in other classrooms and playgrounds as well as volunteering their work in the community garden near campus. Lori and Autumn will welcome you and your child if you want to visit their classroom to see how this unit is being used. The students are especially excited about this curricular focus.
In The Creative Spirit (Plume, 1993), a book based on a PBS series on creativity, authors Daniel Goleman, Paul Kaufman, and Michael Ray point out these common ways adults discourage creativity in children:

**Surveillance** — Hovering over kids, making them feel that they’re constantly being watched while they are working . . . under constant observation, the risk-taking, creative urge goes underground and hides.

**Evaluation** — When we constantly make kids worry about how they are doing, they ignore satisfaction with their accomplishments.

**Rewards** — The excessive use of prizes . . . deprives a child of the intrinsic pleasure of a creative activity.

**Competition** — Putting kids in a win-lose situation, where only one person can come out on top . . . negates the process [that] children progress at their own rates.

**Over-control** — Constantly telling kid how to do things . . . often leaves children feeling like their originality is a mistake and any exploration a waste of time.

**Restricting choice** — Telling children which activities they should engage in instead of letting them follow where their curiosity and passion lead . . . again restricts active exploration and experimentation that might lead to creative discovery and production.

**Pressure** — Establishing grandiose expectations for a child’s performance . . . often ends up instilling aversion for a subject or activity. . . . Unreasonably high expectations often pressure children to perform and conform within strictly prescribed guidelines, and, again, deter experimentation, exploration, and innovation. Grandiose expectations are often beyond children’s developmental capabilities.

Kay Coots, Environmental Health & Safety Director, and Krista Dillon, Emergency Planner/Response Coordinator, recently began an assessment of our building for earthquake preparedness. It was very encouraging to hear that funds are available to retrofit some buildings on campus and they felt it was important to start this assessment with Moss St. and the Olum Center. The initial walk through revealed concerns that we all know about: shelves with lots of boxes and materials that do not have doors with latches. Fortunately, these will be a pretty easy fix. In the meantime, more information is needed about our light fixtures that are suspended from cables, ceiling tile systems in the annex, and our outdoor structures. In the meantime, we are working on an earthquake response plan as well. Since Kay and Krista have been working on these issues across campus, you are likely to be aware of the process from the perspective of the department you work in. We look forward to their plan development and getting some of the retrofitting completed.