This is a busy time of year for all of us as another term ends, summer is around the corner, and many of our UO students are graduating. Before I get too far ahead of myself, I want to reflect on a busy term and a busy year and all the ways that our VOCDC parents have supported our program, staff and children.

We have had a huge amount of support in many ways from our Parent Advisory Council. To remind you, this year’s council includes: Yvonne Bradford, Dusky Steele, Prita Mani, Michelle Holdway, Heather Brinton, Angus Nesbit, Jan Buhmann, Cari VanderKar Moore, Amy Singer and Gordon Lafer. This has been a very hard-working and supportive group who put a lot of time and energy into working in focus groups as well as supporting the activities of our center. Whether it was feeding hungry UO students during finals’ week or helping with our car safety seat check, our council organized and implemented some great activities. We’ll be taking a break from council meetings this summer and recruiting members for the next program year in the fall. Please be sure to thank our current members for their time and contributions at our end-of-the-year party. Also, consider what expertise or talents you have that might be a good match for our council next year.

We had a really great turn out of parents to go on our Vivian Olum birthday parade and then stayed for our buffet lunch. Thanks to Annette Gonzales (Gareth in Voyagers) for helping to make 7 beautiful bouquets of flowers for the children to deliver to our neighbors. Also, thank you to Gina Herrmann who helped our staff get the buffet lunch ready: we wouldn’t have been able to get it done on time without her. Kari Parsons helped our children get new plants in flower pots. Finally, thanks to Angus Nesbitt and Maddie who hauled sand in the wheelbarrow to fill the sandboxes on our preschool playground so I apologize for not having a complete list of parents’ names. If I didn’t mention your name, please know we so appreciate your lending a hand on a very busy day.

The outbreak of the (A) H1N1 virus made life hectic for a number of people locally. It appears that most people are recovering from this and we are grateful that those affected in our county were not serious cases. I appreciate parents keeping us informed as they were made aware (school closures and such) as well as parents keeping current on the information that was sent out by email. The child-care centers on campus will be reviewing policies related to the public school closures and we will refund tuition for any of our kindergarten or school age children excluded due to school closures on May 5th. Policy that is established as a result of this review will guide future practice regarding refunds, therefore the refund that was provided in this case should not be considered precedent setting.

H1N1 Virus Response

End of Spring Term

Carol’s Corner:

Dates to note on your calendar:

- June 22: Summer by the Week begins
- Closed July 3rd
- July Family, Staff & Students picnic at Univ. Park being planned
As we open the doors to spring, our children venture outside to explore. Our teachers are in a unique position to help your children build a strong connection to nature while they also promote healthy physical exercise, curiosity, and an appreciation for the wonders and beauty of our environment. Through activity, observation and conversations, we can nurture your child’s connection to nature that will serve them well throughout their lives. We began last week by emptying planters from last year, mixing the old soil with new compost and filling pots up again. They took the plants provided by our Grounds Department and placed them in planters and gave them water. Some of our parents donated money to purchase some new raised beds for the preschool playground where there will be a sunflower house as well as some vegetables and flowers. Thank you parents for valuing your child’s connection to the natural world by providing this opportunity. As children participate in these gardening activities, they are presented with opportunities to learn academic concepts like classifying, observing what is the same and different, quantifying plant growth with charts and tables, learning vocabulary words to describe the parts of the plants, etc. I also observed lots of opportunities to build friendships through shared experiences and working together as a team. Every year our garden produces fruits and seeds that make the tastiest snacks. As children are ready, they begin to understand in a very real way the idea of an ecosystem as they observe how local plants, insects, and birds help each other live. Many adults have fond memories of gardening with parents and even grandparents and we are pleased to offer this experience for your child at our center. If you didn’t get to help last week, ask your child’s teacher if there are tasks that still need to be done.

Margaux Maganck: Artist & Author of In the Garden

Margaux visited VOCDC on May 14th and shared her original concept book, her oil paintings and her published book with 5 of our classrooms. The children were very interested in seeing her oil paintings and enjoyed the story. Carol has copies of her book In the Garden for sale @ $16. Margaux self-published her book and is working on the art for her next book. She will visit our Summer By the Week program in August to share her art and stories.

Inquiry-based Learning is Essential in Constructivism

Inquiry is a part of human behavior from the moment we are born. Infants use all their senses to explore and to collect information. Babies observe and turn toward faces, grasp at objects to put in their mouths, and follow objects with their eyes, all to gain more information (Thornton 2003). When a toddler repeatedly drops a ball into a tube and watches it vanish, he exhibits delight each time the ball disappears and then reappears somewhere else. It’s as though he is wondering, “Will it happen that way if I do it again, and then again?” These types of behavior are early indicators of human inquiry and of how humans use inquiry experiences to learn (National Science Foundation 2001). Because inquiry is such an intrinsic human learning strategy, it makes sense for teachers to use an inquiry-based approach in their curriculum. “It’s an approach to learning that involves a process of exploring the natural or material world, that leads to asking questions and making discoveries in the search for new understandings” (National Science Foundation 2001). Our teachers observe children to determine what they are curious about. Then they provide opportunities and experiences to explore their areas of curiosity. Teachers’ skillful questioning fosters high-level observations, experimentation and discussions with small groups, individual children or the whole class. Teachers ask open-ended questions and document the children’s ideas and will revisit the questions and ideas again after doing more activities. Observations of how children experience the activities and answers to open-ended questions are used to guide the direction the project may take. (read more about this in March 2009, YOUNG CHILDREN in Carol’s office)

Parent Advisory Council Nutrition Focus Group

Our Nutrition Focus Group has been meeting monthly and has one more meeting before taking a break for the summer. We have talked about a lot of subjects, reviewed a lot of information and materials, and recommended some easy and nutritious changes for our snacks. One of the projects that has been completed is a VOCDC cookbook for staff. We asked our staff to contribute nutritious recipes they use for breakfast, snacks, cooking projects and crafts (there are a lot of ways to make playdough!) Kelley Foley collected all of the recipes and put them in 3 ring binder that is being kept in our kitchen so that all staff and students have access to it. If you have a nutritious breakfast, snack, or cooking project that you would like to contribute to our recipe book, you can send it to Carol via email and it will be added to our collection.

One of the contributions that Amber Yui (nutrition instructor at LCC) contributed is an extensive list of food related children’s books that was compiled by Beth Naylor, M.S., R.D. Senior Nutrition Faculty at Lane Community College. If you are interested in having this document titled “Books for Good Eating”, you can request a copy from Carol Snead.

Our final meeting for the year is June 17th and we will discuss the topic of...
We have two lead teachers who will work their last day at VOCDC on June 19th. It is always sad when we have to say good-bye to staff, however, we are going to make our good-byes full of appreciation and fun!

Dianne Christensen, lead teacher in the Discoverers room (3-5 year olds class in the modular) will be retiring after working for the university since 1997. I am happy to say that after she has some time to vacation, she will be a substitute teacher for us and it will be nice to have someone with her experience and expertise to “fill the gaps” for us as a sub.

Kim Toner will also be leaving VOCDC. She has worked for the university since 1996. Kim is the lead teacher in the Inventors (kindergarten & school age). Our children spend more time in her room than with any other teacher: from kindergarten to 5th grade. Staff and children will want to share their appreciation for her as well.

Our plan is to find an evening in early July that works for both teachers to have a picnic at University Park and celebrate their many years of contributions to VOCDC and the lives of your children. We will have a scrapbook for each that you can share photos and other words of appreciation at the front desk. If you are interested in helping to plan this celebration please talk to Carol or send her an email at: snead@uoregon.edu.

I had the pleasure of meeting Vivian Gussin Paley at a National Head Start Conference several years ago. She is a noted pre-school and kindergarten teacher, child psychologist and early childhood education researcher. Though now retired, she taught and did most of her research at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. In the 1970’s she began writing books on early childhood learning focusing on her observations of and reflections about her classroom and students. To collect her data, she made audio-recordings (this was long before digital video cameras) of her classrooms so she could listen to and analyze the interactions that occurred. She would often hear private conversations between children that helped to analyze the unique way young children communicate with other young children. Each of her books contains one driving theme. For example You Can’t Say You Can’t Play focuses on the desire of some students to exclude others during classroom play. After much discussion about the importance of fairness, the class adopted a rule that children could not exclude other children from play. The rule dramatically improved the children’s relationships, no one was left out, children took more turns, and everyone was kinder to each other.

In her books White Teacher and Kwanzaa and Me, Paley explores the issues of multiculturalism within the classroom. She is best known for her books addressing storytelling and fantasy play: A Child’s Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play, The Boy Who Would Be a Helicopter, Bad Guys Don’t Have Birthdays: Fantasy Play at Four. She uses these works to illustrate that storytelling and fantasy play can significantly impact a child’s academic and social growth. It helps them to make sense of the world around them when they try on roles of adults they have seen as well as fictional characters from all kinds of media. She also observed how it helped children to adapt to the classroom, develop language, and collaborate with peers. Her book The Girl With the Brown Crayon (one of my personal favorites) was awarded the Harvard University Press Virginia and Warren Stone Prize for outstanding book about education and society.

All Children Want and Need Friends

“The only way to have a friend is to be one.” R.W. Emerson

Focus on feelings:
- Help children learn to identify their feelings and those of others
- Share observations about emotions
- Coach children who need 1:1 assistance

Evidenced-Based Friendship Skills:
- Knowing how to give suggestions (play organizers)
- Sharing toys and other materials
- Giving compliments
- Understanding how & when to give an apology
- Turn taking (reciprocity)
- Being helpful

Foster Friendships:
- Read books about sharing, compromising & listening
- Read books about friends and talk about what it means to be one
- Create problems for your child & a friend to solve together (treasure hunt, fixing something, building something)

Create a Friendly Setting:
- Lead by example: model respectful ways to treat others
- Create spaces & activities where 2 or 3 children can be together
- Plan projects for the whole family to do or work on together
Our registration is just about half full for our exciting Summer By the Week I program for children going into 1st through 5th grades. We have weekly camp themes planned which include field trips and swimming at Amazon community pool. If you have friends on campus or in the community with school age children who do not attend VOCDC regularly, please invite them to join us for any or all of our weeks:

Week 1: June 22-29
Strike Up the Band

Week 2: June 29-July 2
A Taste of Summer

Week 3: July 6-10
Creativity at your Fingertips

Week 4: July 13-17
Eco-Explorers

Week 5: July 20-24
Walk on the Wild Side

Week 6: July 27-31
Ocean Commotion

Week 7: Aug. 3-7
To Infinity & Beyond

Week 8: Aug. 10-14
Art-Rageous!

Week 9: Aug. 17-21
Geppeto’s World

Week 10: Aug 24-28
Wild & Wacky Water

If you have co-workers or community friends who are interested, please have them call 346-6586 for more details and registration information.

We have come to the stage in the life of our VOCDC kitchen where we need to fill in the gaps of our supplies and equipment. Some of the things we could use just may be the extras that are cluttering up your drawers and cupboards. If you have any of the items on the list and would like to donate them, it would be very much appreciated!

- Blender
- Griddle
- Silverware
- Serving & cooking utensils
- Graters
- Pot holders
- Glass bowls (microwavable)
- Muffin tins
- Cupcake tins
- Cookie Sheets
- Can opener
- Knives: paring, bread, butcher
- Cutting Boards
- Serving trays
- Tupperware with lids
- Pitchers
- Garlic Press