Spring term is off to a really great start for Ducks: rainy and lots of puddles for swimming! The VOCDC staff as well as the Facilities staff were very busy during the two days of spring break without your children here. The building got some deep cleaning and carpentry work done and the Builders room was rearranged.

We also had the Information Technology crew here to work on establishing ports for computers in and around the building. Our plan for the near future is to have laptop computers in or near each classroom for parents, staff and students to log in and out. We will be purchasing a childcare software system to use for our attendance, data base, billing and enrollment. These are changes that we have been planning for over a year now and are excited to see that it will actually happen soon. Most campus childcare centers use software like the system we plan to use to reduce the use of paper and expand the availability of information for classrooms, parents, and administrative purposes. We will have lots of detailed information about the use of computer-based systems in the near future.

Finally, there are two staffing changes that will take place this term. Kimberly Dawn, our office specialist, is planning to move to Seattle this spring and we will be recruiting a replacement for her position. The other change is in Susan's Schneider's position as Infant Toddler Mentor Teacher. The duties of this position description included both classroom teaching and full supervisory responsibility for the 4 infant and toddler classrooms. However, as most of her hours were dedicated to assisting in the classroom, it has become clear to both Susan and I that this wasn't working well for the teachers, the classroom, or for her. Susan's 14 years of experience at VOCDC and her extensive education have been a great resource for the infant and toddler programs and we want to make sure that she is able to spend her time providing the leadership and support that the staff and programs deserve.

Beginning this spring, Susan's work hours will be administrative only, allowing her to be more present for the infant and toddler staff and parents and to successfully manage her other administrative duties.

New Lead Teacher for Dreamers

With the help of parents from the Dreamers room, we have completed the recruitment, interviewing and hiring process! Natalie Marshall will be the new lead teacher for this classroom, beginning April 5th. She will spend the first 3 days completing orientation, getting email started, etc and then parents will regularly see her in the classroom. She will have the same hours that Sara Gilman did: opening at 7:30am and ending her shift at 4pm. Natalie has worked in Cottage Grove at the Relief Nursery for the past 5 years. She worked for a few years with preschoolers but the last 3 years has been with infants and toddlers. Natalie studied child development at Southwestern Oregon Community College and got her B.S. in Early Childhood and Elementary Education at Western Oregon State University as well as a teaching license. She lives in Creswell with her husband and two children. I know you will welcome her to the greater VOCDC community of families!
Parent-child play time on the lawn

You may have noticed that many of the VOCDC children and parents have been playing with soccer balls on the field behind the Law School, usually around the end of the day when you are picking up your child. This has been going on for several years now, but recently in a more organized way.

This is a parent-organized and supervised activity. Everyone is welcome! There is a corner of the field that can be kept safe and mellow for little ones. While at first glance, this may look like a soccer group, there are all sorts of active games. Soccer and freeze tag are the most popular, as well as hide and seek, Frisbee, run-and-tackle, sit on the grass and look for four leaf clovers, throwing other kinds balls around, and ‘duck, duck, goose’.

These activities can now happen any day at any time and be initiated by anyone! There is a grey plastic bin next to the window in the bike storage area that stores all the equipment. It has a lock with a combination: OLC1 (which stands for Olum Center 1, to help you remember). Anyone is welcome to get the balls, cones and other equipment out. Wednesdays seem to be the most popular but the weather and parent schedules are the deciding factors. If you have some items you’d like to share, you can put them in the bin as well (a pump for the balls would be nice). A final note... the bin, the bag, balls and cones, have cost about $100. If you would like to contribute $5 as a share in this activity, it would be appreciated. Please give your donation to Dev Sinha, the organizer of this activity and the person who has purchased the equipment.

Carol’s Family Fun Time: Spring/Summer Road Trips

Several parents have requested that I repeat my list of child-friendly things to do in and around Oregon. Most of them are day trips with 1-2 hours of travel time, one way. If you would like to share some of your favorite excursions for your family, I can share those as well in a future newsletter. I often forget that many of our parents are not from Oregon and haven’t been off the I-5 corridor to see some of the geographic differences in this state, so please share with us your recommendations. Here’s my list:

♦ **Umpqua Discovery Center**: Reedsport (on the Central Oregon coast). This is an educational and cultural museum for all ages with interactive exhibits and programs that illustrate how land, water and people have shaped each other over time. Until May 31, open 10am-4pm, then 9am to 5 in the summer. www.umpquadiscoverycenter.com

♦ **Junior Ranger program** is for 6-12 year old visitors to any of the state parks (too numerous to list). By becoming a Junior Ranger, children get involved with plants, animals and park protection. The program is run by park staff and hosts. www.jrbeaver.org/main.php

♦ **Free event at Wildlife Safari**: Saturday, April 24, 11am -3pm, open to the public. Agencies that work with families and children from around Douglas county will have a booth with information. In addition, April 10th is Celebrate Cheetahs, April 18th is Party for the Planet, and April 24th is Celebrate Children Day.

♦ **Woodburn Tulip Festival**: end of March through the end of April. Besides seeing acres and acres of tulips, you can examine the antique steam tractors, enjoy local artists, try the rock climbing wall, hot air balloons, use the playground, water play and rides on the “cow train” are fun for children. www.web.oregon.com/trips/woodburn_tulips.cfm

♦ **A.C. Gilbert’s Discovery Village for Children**: 116 Marion St. NE, Salem, OR. The museum is located in the downtown Riverfront Park. There is year-round indoor and outdoor interactive exhibits that promote learning through play. Three houses with hands-on experience. www.acgilbert.org

♦ **Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum**: in McMinnville, home of the Spruce Goose. www.sprucegoose.org
Autumn and Lori, teachers in the Inventors class, applied for a Sustainability Grant but unfortunately were not successful in getting funding. However, they are not going to let that be a deal breaker for the great science curriculum they want to do with children! Parents of this group have begun to donate funds so that an indoor grow unit can be purchased and used for growing plants and vegetables year round. They are close to reaching their target and if you want to contribute to their plant life curriculum fund, it would be much appreciated. The grow unit will be used by all classrooms that want to participate and, remember, your child may spend more years in our school age program than any other classroom in the center! They are also accepting donations of any gardening tools, hose, watering cans, small, medium and large plant containers, seeds, plant starts, etc. You can give any donations to the admin. staff or call Autumn or Lori if you have questions about how you could support their curriculum. The Inventors room phone is 541.346-6598. You can email Autumn at autuma@uoregon.edu. Thanks for considering how you can help.

Parents have been concerned about the gate next to the Annex off of our parking lot. After consulting with campus Facility, Public Safety and Environmental Health and Safety, we decided to increase the height of the gate and the side panels to the gate so that no one can reach over the top and get in. It still allows children and staff to easily exit for the purpose of emergency evacuations. We feel that this has created a much more secure situation for staff and children in the Annex and on the Annex playground.

During winter term, the Grounds Crew was able to make covers for all of our sand boxes so that when the children are not using them, cats and other animals cannot get into the sand. This is a state health and safety requirement.

All of the repairs have now been completed from the leaky pipes in December! Hopefully you noticed that the Commons has some new additions and the floor has been thoroughly cleaned and waxed. The Facility and Maintenance staff do great work!

The Builders room got new gates, carpet and other remodeling over spring break. Their new arrangement is working really well for them so stop and take a look!