Happy Holidays to our Head Start families! I am truly thankful for the efforts our parents, children, and staff have made in keeping everyone safe this school year. The first part of the school year has been extremely challenging. We have experienced an unprecedented staff shortage, which has forced the closure of classrooms. Currently, the program has approximately one-third of its teacher and one-half of its bus driving positions open. I am hopeful that we will be able to hire and keep our staff in the upcoming school year and appreciate your patience as we work through these issues. We are considering changing our meeting days starting January 3, 2022 to promote staff retention and support. You should have received a survey about this. Please return this survey as soon as possible if you haven’t done so already.

Thanks to all the parents who attended parent-teacher conferences the week of Thanksgiving. Maintaining regular and open communication with your child’s teacher is important in building the skills necessary for success in school. If you missed your conference and want to come discuss your child’s progress, simply contact your child’s teacher to make an appointment.

Get to Know. . .Krystal Hexamer

Many of you already know me because this is my fifth year at the Carbondale center. I was hired as a sub-teacher, promoted to Assistant Teacher, and now I am a Lead Teacher. The teachers and staff that I’ve worked with over the years have taught me so much about the Head Start program and how young children learn and develop. I love seeing their smiles and getting tiny hugs from them daily.

I am from NE Iowa and have moved around a lot with my husband Doug of 19 years. We have two sons — Karsen, age 10 and Karter, age eight who keep us busy nightly with their after-school activities. Karter attended the Carbondale center when I started working as a sub-teacher, so we were able to learn together. When I have free time, I like to make my boys photo books online and then have them published. I am about six years behind with that project. It has been a pleasure meeting and working with you all!

**We want to take this time to thank Krystal for her work with the children and families at the Carbondale center.**

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**From your Policy Council**

Hello, my name is Cody Stanley. I am the father of two wonderful daughters. A newborn baby girl, Meadow, and Rosalie who is four. Rosalie is enrolled at the Marion Center. This is my second year as an active policy council member. Over the last two years it has been my pleasure to watch Rosalie thrive academically and socially, while in the program. Being a member of the policy council, I have gained insight into the systems, processes, and workings of our Head Start program. I now have an adept understanding of the measures that are taken to ensure the best proper care and teaching of our children.

I am thankful to have the means and ability to play an active role as father and teacher in my children’s life. As a policy council member and a member of the parent committee, I get to be involved in their education, as well as learn with them. I believe that the key to our children’s future, is to be as involved as much as possible, and help them progress to be the best possible version of themselves.

As we continue to face hard and tough times during the pandemic, it is important that our children see us thrive while overcoming the challenges before us. I want to encourage everyone to be as involved in your child’s educational experience as much as you can. Please stay safe, happy, and healthy through these trying times.

*Cody Stanley*
Getting Your Child Ready For School

It’s great to see and hear the children back at the centers again. This place is pretty boring over the summer without our children and families around! I enjoyed meeting some of the new parents at Parent Orientation. For those of you who have not visited your child’s center yet this year, please take some time to visit soon and meet your child’s teachers, your Community Worker, and the Center Director. We encourage all of our parents to take an active role in their child’s education, and the first step is being present at school. Also, September is when we hold our first parent meetings at each center. You can find the dates for your center in the blue box to the right. Please come out to your center and participate in this meeting. Your voice is important in the decisions made at Head Start!

—Dr. Lea Maue

Ready Or Not, Kindergarten Here we Come!

While many of us focus on the basics of letter and number recognition or reading skills, kindergarten readiness encompasses more than these few isolated skills. We need to look at the child as a whole, while keeping in consideration the skills and strengths each child has developed.

Here are some tips to help you prepare your child for kindergarten:

• **Help them to develop independence at home.** Encourage your child to dress himself, take his coat on and off and hang it up, use the bathroom without assistance and wash his hands and put on his own shoes.

• **Teach responsibility.** Start transferring small responsibilities over to your child, if you haven’t already. Even when it may be easier for you to complete the tasks, let him accept the responsibility.

• **Develop and follow routines.** Set up morning routines that will transfer into a school setting.

• **Read aloud to your child.** Get your child a library card, take her to the library to check out books, and be sure to read to your child every day.

• **Acknowledge his feelings.** Your child may express being nervous, not wanting to go, or feeling very excited to start school. Whatever they feel, take time to acknowledge those feelings. If they are nervous, talk about why they feel that way and maybe take a school tour to relieve some stress about the move to a new school.

• **Communication with your child’s teacher is key.** Take initiative and communicate with your child’s teacher about your hopes and dreams for your child. Discuss what goals you want your child to achieve before Kindergarten.

Rather than worry about whether your child is ready to read and write, think about his or her skills as a whole. What can they do well that will help them succeed?

COVID–19 Response Resources

Below is a resource that can be of help to you if you are in need of assistance with food, employment, rent/utility aid, emergency services, and more.

211 is an easy to remember three-digit telephone number that families can use for quick and easy access to information about health and human services. Just dial 211 and a trained professional will answer your call and help identify and connect you with the human services provider that may best meet your needs.
Your Journey Together: Building the Resilience of Children and Families (Building Your Bounce)

Strengthening CAREgiving Practices that Promote Resilience

Daily caregiving practices can dramatically impact how children think, feel, and behave. The quality of parent and child interactions, together with the environment where those interactions take place, set the stage for resilience building. Caregiving practices focused on loving interactions within a safe environment help children to learn, live and play. Quality caregiving focus on the adult’s caregiving (i.e. parenting) practices and skills that support consistency, attuned relationships, and creating a safe and loving environment.

Defining CAREgiving Practices: (Consistency, Attuned Relationships and Environment)

- **Consistency**—Being consistent are those simple rituals and routines that you do the same way on a regular basis every day with your child, which includes how you provide care to your child (i.e. Creating a consistent bedtime routine, reading stories together before bedtime).

- **Attuned Relationships**—Having an attuned relationship with your child means you are in sync with his or her wants and needs during challenging and happy times (i.e. Providing safe and gentle affection to help children with expressed needs as you engage in one-on-one interactions).

- **Environment**—The environment includes having a safe, healthy, and loving home setting both inside and outside. Try getting down on the child's level so that you can look at things through the eyes of your child. (i.e. Creating an environment that offers activities that match children’s skills and interests as they continue to develop confidence to become curious explorers).

CAREgiving practices create building blocks for supporting the within-child protective factors of attachment/relationship, initiative, and self-regulation. These practices are related to social emotional competencies that help children become more resilient. During December’s Parent Committee Meeting we will review Connecting Caregiving Practices for building resilience in children.

*Each month in this section of the newsletter we will feature tips, strategies, activities, and information from Your Journey Together and Building Your Bounce. Stay tuned as we dive deeper into Your Journey Together and Building Your Bounce!*

From “The Devereux Center for Resilient Children (DCRC).”

“Educating Children, Empowering Families, Strengthening Communities”
Recipe: Nutrition Activity: Frozen Banana Cereal Pop

Hello Parents! The children will be making Frozen Cereal Pops in the classroom for our Nutrition Activity this Month. Here is the recipe for you to try at home.

**INGREDIENTS FOR FROZEN BANANA CEREAL POP: YIELDS 8 POPS**

- Strawberry Yogurt
- Fruit Loops
- Medium bananas, peeled and cut crosswise in half
- Wooden pop sticks

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Place yogurt and cereal in separate shallow bowls.
2. Insert pop sticks through cut side of bananas.
3. Dip bananas in yogurt, then roll in cereal to coat.
4. Transfer to waxed paper-lined baking sheets.
5. Freeze until firm for one hour. Serve immediately after freezing and enjoy.

**Safety Tip:** An adult should slice the ingredients.

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**Book of the Month: Llama Llama Red Pajama by Ann Dewdney**

**Activity:** Read the book aloud or watch the story being read aloud on YouTube. 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HD1g3P-nKWo

Use the sheet included (with llama and quilt) in the newsletter to write random uppercase letters in each quilt square-write one uppercase letter per square. Use the other sheet included (empty quilt squares without llama) to write either the matching uppercase or lowercase letter (A-A or A-a), depending on your child's level of letter knowledge. Color each square on the second sheet a different color. Explain to the child that s/he will be matching letters to one another in order to complete Llama’s quilt. You may need to model the first quilt square for your child by naming the letter on the quilt then finding its matching square and placing the square onto the quilt pattern.

**School Readiness Goals Aligned To This Activity:**

- Children will recognize letters and letter sounds and demonstrate phonological awareness.
- Children will demonstrate persistence and engagement in a variety of creative experiences.