From the Director’s Desk

I hope everyone is keeping safe and healthy as we start to see a little bit of relief from COVID infections in our area. 2022 did not start off well for southern Illinois and the program. We saw the most COVID infections since the start of the pandemic, particularly in children. Thankfully, children experienced only mild symptoms, but the disruption in care was a huge problem for so many of our families. I apologize for any hardship that this may have caused, but we are required to follow guidance from the health department.

Per the Department of Children and Family Services, we still require all children and staff to wear masks. The Head Start children have not struggled with the masks, and they are so good and keeping them on. Thanks to parents for working with us in supporting this practice with the children. Let’s hope that we will finally be in a place this spring where we can stop wearing masks. I send all of our families well wishes for health and safety! — Dr. Lea Maue

Get to Know…Jennifer Burgess

I grew up in Jonesboro, Illinois. After graduating high school in 2002, I attended Shawnee Community College, where I earned my Associate of Arts degree in 2004. I completed my Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education in 2006 from Southeast Missouri State University. I began my teaching career as a substitute teacher for five years. I was hired at the Marion Head Start Center in the Fall of 2012 as an assistant teacher. Now I am a Lead Teacher, and love helping new teachers as they are hired at our center.

I always knew I wanted to be a teacher because of the influential teachers in my life, and I wanted to help children just like they helped me. I enjoy my job very much and have met several wonderful coworkers that have helped me grow in knowledge and experience along the way. I can’t believe that it’s been nine years! I look back every day, and I wouldn't trade it for the world. I love teaching children, watching them grow, and seeing their eyes light up when they learn something new. Getting hugs and looking at their smiling faces are what makes my day and I know the children are well worth it.

I have been married to my wonderful husband Russell for 9 years. I have no children of my own, but I do have a dog, Bama, who is like my child. She is my world, and the children love getting to see new pictures of her. I enjoy spending time with my family and we are very close. I love my family and spending time with them. My family has been nothing but supportive of me in my career endeavors. Teaching is not the easiest job in the world, but I know it is what I am good at and where I belong! Thank you Jennifer for your work with the children and families in our program.

From your Health & Nutrition Team

Dear Head Start Families,

We hope that you are staying healthy and safe! February is National Oral Health Month, so we wanted to be able to celebrate with you and your child by providing some additional resources for you. This month you will be receiving a dental bag that will have a toothbrush, toothpaste, flossers, and a toothbrushing chart with dry erase marker for your child to track how many times they brush.

We want to emphasize how important it is to continue to brush teeth at least twice per day. Cavities (also known as caries or tooth decay) are one of the most common chronic diseases of childhood in the United States. Untreated cavities can cause pain and infections that may lead to problems with eating, speaking, playing, and learning. At this young age, please help your child brush their teeth! Make sure to use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste and always spit it out, rather than swallow. Allow them to brush first, and you follow up with any missed teeth—especially back teeth.

If you or your child are have any concerns with dental health and need help following up with a Dentist, please contact your Community Worker at your child’s center. Finally, we hope that this dental bag is helpful and happy brushing!
Developing Social Skills

Having good relationships with a range of people is very important for a person’s mental health. To develop these relationships, children must learn social skills, such as:

- communication skills – using the right words for the situation, smiling and facial expressions, using eye contact and listening
- entry skills – knowing how to join a group
- being part of a group – sharing, taking turns, following rules, cooperating, managing conflict, helping others
- being a friend – supporting friends, being kind, helpful and affectionate, being willing to follow requests and participate in group decision-making.

Ideas to help your child develop good social skills:

- Show children what good social skills look like. They learn by watching as well as participating. Your child is probably copying the way you behave when you’re around other people.
- Be consistent when teaching social skills. Keep telling your child things like, "Everyone gets a turn," and "He is frustrated, you know how that feels." As your child becomes older, your explanations can get more complicated, but the messages should stay the same.
- Talk with your child about his feelings and your own. Talk about situations that make us feel bad and those that make us feel good.
- Give your child lots of opportunities for imaginary play such as: dress-up, telephone play, playing shop, acting out stories and rhymes, playing with other children, constructing things with bricks, cut-outs and dough, and helping around the house with simple chores.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child’s social skills, please contact your child’s teacher or family community service worker.

COVID–19 Response Resources

LIHEAP

Need help affording your utilities? You may qualify for bill assistance!

If you cannot afford your utilities, you may be eligible for financial assistance through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program—or LIHEAP.

LIHEAP helps low-income consumers pay their electric and gas bills. About 350,000 Illinois households get LIHEAP funding of some kind, although that number is expected to increase as a result of the current economic crisis. Funding is currently available and potential program participants are encouraged to apply. To see if you qualify, call the LIHEAP Hotline at 1-877-411-9276 (WARM).

You can also visit their website:

https://www.citizensutilityboard.org/blog/2020/07/02/need-help-affording-your-utilities-you-may-qualify-for-bill-assistance/
Your Journey Together: Building the Resilience of Children and Families (Building Your Bounce)

Connecting Resilience to Everyday Life

This month we are re-exploring the meaning of the three protective factors that all young children need in order to be resilient (initiative, attachment/relationships, and self-regulation. Last month, we spoke about how resilience is family, and that family connections and strong family relationships create strong children. Resilience has been called “ordinary magic” (Ann Masten 2001). Strengthening children’s initiative, attachment/relationships, and self-regulation can be done everyday during ordinary activities. Think about how you can build your child’s resilience while traveling in the car, watching TV together, during mealtimes, and during morning routines or bedtime rituals.

This month’s YJT Parent Curriculum Lesson: Module Three: “Your Special Child”, reflects on your child’s special qualities. Knowing these special qualities will assist you in furthering your journey of strengthening your child’s social and emotional wellness and resilience. Collecting this kind of information can be done by observing your child, watching them while they are playing and talking, and also by listening to them and asking them more questions about their day, and other things.

Take a few moments to answer the following questions to assist you in learning more about the “special qualities” of each child in your care:

1. What are two words to best describe my child?
2. What are two things he/she likes to do?
3. What are two of his/her favorite things?
4. Who are two people that are important to my child?
5. What are two of my child’s strengths?

Family Involvement Month. Here is a Resilience Building At-Home Activity: Make a Scrap Book!
Create a simple scrapbook or notebook about your child. This book can include pictures, drawings, photographs, letters, and your own written notes. You can be as creative or straightforward as you like by documenting important events and experiences, recording stories and information that your child shares, and by reviewing important family history, and gathering information about your child that is important for safe keeping.

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You are invited to attend monthly Parent Committee Meetings. (See CLASSTag for invites and other information). From: Your Journey Together and Building Your Bounce. From “The Devereux Center for Resilient Children (DCRC).”

“Educating Children, Empowering Families, Strengthening Communities”

618-453-6448
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SIU Carbondale Head Start
Recipe: Nutrition Activity:

Hello Parents! On February 22nd the children will be making a Fruit Cone in the classroom for our Nutrition Activity.

Here is the recipe for you to try at home.

INGREDIENTS FOR FRUIT CONE

- 1 Waffle Cone per child
- 1/2 cup Assorted fruit (strawberries, sliced bananas, blueberries, mandarin oranges etc.)
- Container of Regular or Low Fat Whip Cream (Any brand of your choice)

DIRECTIONS

1. Distribute 1 waffle cone per child. Fill waffle cone 1/2 full with assorted fruit. Top with whip cream eat and enjoy!

Book of the Month: I Love You Too by Ziggy Marley

Activity: Read the book aloud to your child or watch it on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNOBruf3Vvl&t=70s

While reading or listening to the book, focus on identifying the rhyming words (bee/tree, you/too, green/clean, etc.) throughout the book. Explain to your child that rhyming words are words that sound the same at the end and different in the beginning. After reading the book, cut out the provided rhyming words and work with your child to match them. If you need assistance with completing this activity, talk to your child’s teacher.

School Readiness Goals Aligned To This Activity:

- Children will use small muscles to manipulate materials with strength and coordination, including using art and writing tools to convey meaning through written symbols and letters.
- Children will recognize letters and letter sounds and demonstrate phonological awareness.
- Children will demonstrate persistence and engagement in a variety of creative experiences.
- Children will understand and follow classroom expectations, routines, and directions.