From the Director’s Desk

February is always a busy month for our Head Start program! Firstly, February is Family Involvement month, and we invite you to visit your child’s classroom to assist with activities, eat a meal or snack, or just be present with your child. Please note that all classroom volunteers are required to show proof of COVID immunization. This is a requirement set by the Office of Head Start for all employees and classroom volunteers. This month is also Dental Health month, and our Health and Nutrition Coordinator has planned some special activities for the children about the importance of taking care of their precious teeth. Dental health bags will be going out with goodies for the children. Lastly, parent/teacher conferences are scheduled this month. You are your child’s first and foremost teacher and your involvement in your child’s learning is so important. Please take advantage of this opportunity to meet with your child’s teacher and discuss his or her progress.

— Dr. Lea Maue

Get to Know...Melody Lukesh

Hello! My name is Melody A. Lukesh. I'm a lead teacher at the John A. Logan Head Start center in Carterville. I was born and raised in Chicago IL where I lived for 45 years before I moved to Southern IL. I graduated with an Associate’s degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE) from John A. Logan College in 2006. In 2010, I graduated from Kendall College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in ECE, making the dean’s list the summer of 2009. I have an ECE Level 5 Credential with Gateway to Opportunity, and a Paraprofessional Educator’s Certification also.

This is my eight year with SIU Carbondale Head Start. I love building relationship with the families, children and staff. I feel so thankful that I get to change the lives of the children I work with, and gain a relationship with the children and their parents. When I don't work, I teach 3rd grade Sunday school. I serve on the board of a non-for-profit organization called Fighting Cancer Today. I’m a single mom to a six-year old boy name Levi. My hobbies are hiking, taking my boat out and enjoying the water, and traveling to different states every summer. I can't wait to see what 2023 has in store for me.

We want to thank Melody for her hard work and dedication to the children and families at the John A. Logan center.

From Your Disabilities & Mental Health Coordinator

Dear Head Start Families,

Your mental and emotional wellbeing is one of the most important factors to determine your overall health. Handling day to day stress, managing emotions, maintaining relationships, and persistence are all mental and social-emotional skills that you must use throughout the day. If these skills are not consistently used in a positive manner, it can affect your physical health. These effects could include high blood pressure, anxiety, depression, weight gain or loss, and digestive issues.

If you are in need of support for yourself or your child, please contact your teacher or community worker. We can connect you with one of our Mental Health Consultants. They can work with you to identify concerns, find possible solutions, give suggestions, or connect you to an outside agency. This support can be a one time thing or ongoing, based on your need.

Your wellness matters— you need to take care of yourself so you can care for your child! If you need support, please let us know— we’re here to help.
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/
Parent Curriculum Corner

How to Help Your Child Recognize and Understand Frustration

In this newsletter you will find the Pyramid Model Backpack Connection Series, “How to Help Your Child Recognize & Understand Frustration.” The “Try This at Home” section of the handout can be helpful while working through the emotion of frustration. It is a common emotion that adults and children face.

Inside this newsletter is another social story entitled, “We Can Be Problem Solvers At Home!” A great way to practice problem solving is to use pictures and stories to talk about problems and the different solutions children can use. Use the scenario cards within the social story to tell a story. Look at the picture with your child and family members, and talk about the story together as you are reading. When you talk with your child about the pictures, match what you say with your child’s level of understanding. For example, use a simple story for a child with less language or understanding.

These steps in the social story can help with problem solving:
1. If I have a problem, first I have to think about it... What is my problem?
2. And I have to think of a way to make it better... Think, think, think of some solutions.
3. What would happen if I tried my solution... Would it be safe? How would everyone feel?
4. Then... give it a try! If my solution didn’t work, I might have to think, think, think of another solution.

Another resource that may be helpful is from PBS Kids. Here is the website.
https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-to-teach-frustration-tolerance-to-kids

Family Involvement Month

This month’s Family Involvement Month activity is for all families, parents and children to create a “Family “Heart” Collage” together. Send your collages to school with your child for all to see in your child’s center and classroom. We are also celebrating “100 Days of SIU Carbondale Head Start” on Thursday, February 23th. Show your creativity and create your own “100 Day” T-Shirts and wear them to school. All children that attend school that day will receive a “100 Day” certificate.

Monthly Parent Committee Meeting

You are invited to attend the monthly In-Person Parent Committee Meetings this month. (Flyers will be sent home with children. See CLASSTag for more information).

“Educating Children, Empowering Families, Strengthening Communities”

618-453-6448
headstart.siu.edu
SIU Carbondale Head Start
Recipe: Nutrition Activity:

Hello Parents! On February 22nd the children will be making a Chicken & Cheese Snack Cup with Grapes in the classroom for our Nutrition Activity.

**INGREDIENTS:**
- 9 ounce chicken breast, cooked, skinless, rotisserie, 1/4” diced
- 6 1/4 oz. Colby Cheese, 1/4/diced
- Red grapes, seedless, fresh, halved.

**DIRECTIONS**
In plastic cups or bowls, have children layer 1 Tbsp chicken and 1 Tbsp cheese. Top each cup with 1/2 cup of sliced grapes.

Book of the Month: Stomp, Wiggle, Clap and Tap

**Activity:** Read the book aloud to your child or watch it on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzDtUxFEWso

As you read along and listen to the story, try moving along to help stimulate the brain and provide a fun, creative way to build spatial awareness. Tons of colorful pictures offer children visual clues for the movements, and rhyming words make reading aloud feel like music! Notice how the body parts of the characters in the story are moving like their hands, hips, arms, and toes. Keep the fun going by actively participating in the story-time movement. Pay close attention to the rhyming words throughout the story. Explore a list of online dance videos and resources to help keep moving and developing even when the book is finished. Set the stage for an active experience for all in the family to enjoy.

**School Readiness Goals Aligned To This Activity:**
- Children will demonstrate fine (gross) motor strength and coordination.
- Children will listen to and understand increasingly complex language.
- Children will demonstrate persistence and engagement in a variety of creative experiences.