Earth Day - April 22, 2009

Earth Day is a great excuse to get “down and dirty” and our child care centers all around the nation enthusiastically, and literally, “dug in” to celebrate the day!

The Building Blocks Child Development Center, located in GSA’s Auburn, Washington Complex, partnered with the GSA Property Management Office to celebrate. The children enjoyed digging, raking, scooping and dumping dirt. The child care staff assisted the children as they planted tomatoes, strawberries and wildflower seeds. The children can’t wait to see and taste the fruits of their labor!

At Downtown NYC, the Butterflies/Young Toddler class at Fedkids planted lima beans and now they are carefully caring for their young seedlings.

At the Clinton Street Center in Syracuse, the children happily tackled their annual gardening duties of planting flowers and trees in celebration of Earth Day and Arbor Day. Thanks to their hard work, and a generous donation of plants, trees, soil, and pots by some Clinton Street parents, the flower boxes around the children’s playground are now blooming with colorful petunias and marigolds. The children also planted their own young evergreen trees which they then transported home for transplanting to a site of their own choosing – either in their yard or a public location in their neighborhood.

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Children at the Clinton Street Center working on their annual gardening.

Earth Day Planting Celebration at the Auburn GSA Complex.

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Congratulations are in order for the following centers:

New Accreditations:
- Harry Pregerson Child Development Center, Los Angeles, CA
- State Street Day Care Center, Rochester, NY
- Healthy Environments Child Development Center, San Francisco, CA
- Jamaica Kids Early Learning Center, Jamaica, NY
- Sunny Days Early Learning Center, Riverdale, MD

Reaccreditations:
- Colonnade Children’s Center, Denver, CO
- Diplotots, Washington DC
- Federal Trade Commission Child Care Center, Washington DC
- Healthy Environments Child Development Center, San Francisco, CA
- Jamaica Kids Early Learning Center, Jamaica, NY
- Little Aviators Child Care Center, Renton, WA
- Federal Trade Commission Child Care Center, Washington DC

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Eco-Healthy Child Care

Certain plastics are known to contain toxic substances that may have negative impacts on human health. Children are particularly vulnerable to toxins since their immune systems and organs are still developing. Young children are also at greater risk since they often insert plastic objects into their mouths. Baby bottles, sippy cups, teething rings, and toys are often made with phthalates and Bisphenol-A (BPA). These toxic ingredients in plastics are of particular concern, as research increasingly shows that these chemicals mimic hormones and disrupt normal development and growth.

7 Tips for Safer Use of Plastics:
1. Avoid plastics with recycling code #3, #6, and #7.
2. Do not heat or microwave food in plastic containers, as leaching of toxic chemicals from plastic to food or liquid may occur.
3. Use PVC-free plastic wrap (buy plastic wrap and bags made with polyethylene).
4. Minimize the use of canned foods and canned drinks.
5. Choose phthalate-free toys. Look for toys labeled “phthalate-free” or “PVCfree”. Choose toys made from polystyrene or polyethylene, or avoid plastic toys altogether.
6. Purchase phthalate-free beauty products.
7. Ask your dentist for BPA-free sealants and composite fillings.

Congratulations to the following centers which have received Eco-Healthy endorsement this quarter:
- Club Fed, Albany, NY
- BSC Kids Place, Holtville, NY
- Fallon Federal CCC, Baltimore, MD
- Green Byrne, Philadelphia, PA
- Academy of Early Learning, Philadelphia, PA
- East Mountain, Wilkes Barre, PA
- Atlanta Federal Center Child Enrichment, Atlanta, GA
- FAA Little Flyers, College Park, GA
- Windy City Kids, Chicago, IL
- Uncle Sam’s Kids, St Louis, MO
- Eagle’s Loft, Ames, IA
- Day Nursery Federal Center, Indianapolis, IN
- Stars & Stripes Learning Station, Battle Creek, MI
- Centennial Mall, Lincoln, NE
- Castle Kids, New Orleans, LA
- Future Stars, Austin, TX
- A Child’s Place, Fort Worth, TX
- Columnade Children’s Center, Denver, CO
- Advantage Learning Center, Lakewood, CO
- Little Aviators, Hawthorne, CA
- Pacific Preschool at Ziggurat, Laguna Niguel, CA
- GeoKids, Menlo Park, CA
- Magic Years, Richmond, CA
- Kids on Broadway, San Diego, CA
- Healthy Environments, San Francisco, CA
- Rainbow School, Honolulu, HI
- Building Blocks, Auburn, WA
- Commerce Kids, Washington, DC
- Coast Guard HQ CDC, Washington, DC
- Diplomats, Washington, DC
- National Office CDC (IRS), Washington, DC
- Sheila Watkins CDC, Washington, DC
- Triangle Tots, Washington, DC
- Greenwood Preschool, Hyattsville, MD
- Georgetown Hill (Healthy Beginnings), Rockville, MD

More Information

If you want to know more on the EHCC Program, contact your Regional Child Care Coordinator or visit www.oeconline.org/ourwork/ecoriskinfo/ehcc}

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In Syracuse, New York, the children at the Clinton Street Center were treated to readings of “Maybe a Bear Ate It!” by Senior Property Manager Gary Palmer and “The Three Javelinas” by Property Manager Jay Burris. GSAs Auburn Regional Office hosted a reading by Acting Regional Deputy Commissioner Darin Frost. Mr. Frost read, “If You Give A Mouse a Cookie” to a group of preschool children from Building Blocks Child Development Center in Auburn Washington. At the conclusion, then Acting Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Facilities Management and Services Programs, Dan Brown, served fresh baked cookies to the children and their parents.

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Eco-Healthy Child Care is a national program created by the Oregon Environmental Council to ensure that child care settings are as healthy, safe and green as possible by reducing children’s exposure to toxins. GSAs is proud to partner with the Oregon Environmental Council in support of child care centers going green.

Congratulations & thank you to all for helping us achieve our first goal. Nationally, GSA centers are now 51% Eco-Healthy endorsed. Our goal was 50% by March 1.