



**WOODCHUCKS**  
**PAGE 4-7**  
 MS. AMA  
 MS. FLORENCA



**SQUIRRELS**  
**PAGE 8-11**  
 MS. ABY  
 MS. MARIE



**SPOTTED OWLS**  
**PAGE 12-14**  
 MS. NIKOLETA



**SNOWY OWLS**  
**PAGE 15, 16**  
 MS. TAMARA

# NEWSLETTER

## *From the Director's chair...*

Hello Stepping Stones families!

We had a wonderful month of November!

Our Grateful Feast was a huge success! The children loved spending time with friends in different classrooms. A big thank you to parents who were able to attend. What a great way to start the holiday season!

Another big thank you to those who participated and add leaves to our Preschool Grateful Tree. It not only turned out beautiful, but helped teach our students about gratitude.

Our annual Canned Food Drive was a success! We filled a shopping card with donations of dry and canned foods, as well as three large bags of diapers, to the Watertown Food Pantry! Thank you to all who donated!

This December, we will host our annual Helping Hands Fundraiser. All gifts are donated to the Foster Care System for the holiday season. Please keep an eye open for Helping Hands gift opportunities posted on the preschool front door.

A big thank you to parents who bid on pieces during the Silent Art Auction! Your contributions will go towards the preschool building improvement fund!

- Elizabeth, Maggie and Tara



Issue 3.

## *Important Reminders*

- Encourage your child to wash or sanitize their hands upon entering the building and before engaging in play. Adults and children are welcome to use the hand sanitizer at the main entrance or any classroom sink.
- Call or email Maggie if your child(ren) will arrive late or be out by 9:15 AM. You can call the preschool building directly: 617-744-5447. Planned student absences help us accommodate additional extra day requests from our families, as well as plan teacher vacation days.
- Medications that are not considered “Emergency Medication” are stored in the Preschool Office. See Maggie if your child(ren) require ANY medication(s) while attending our program.
- Flu shots are highly recommended by leading medical researches as well as our center. Let’s all try to stay healthy this Winter!
- Please check your child’s extra clothing bin to ensure they have weather appropriate clothing. Double check sizes in case your child has outgrown any clothing.
- Please send your child with a warm hat and gloves and/or mittens every day.
- Check your family mailbox regularly.

## *Upcoming Dates and Events*

### Pizza Day

Every Friday!

### Helping Hands Gifts Due

Wednesday, December 13

### Center Closed for Winter Break

Monday, December 25 –  
Monday, January 1

## *Preschool Classrooms Wish List*

*Your generous donations and willingness to contribute to the classroom are so appreciated! Thank you!*

*We are currently on the lookout for:*

- Dance Party and Nap Time CDs!
- Books on CD!
- Felt Board Stories!
- Dress-Up Clothes for the Dramatic Play Area (Consider donating old Halloween costumes!)
- Recyclables! We'll take your toilet paper and paper towel rolls, egg cartons, shoe boxes, cardboard boxes, newspaper, etc.!
- Plastic Bags!
- Scrap Paper!

## *This month in the Woodchuck classroom...*

Hi Woodchuck families!

We had so much fun learning this month!

This month the Woodchucks participated in a lot of dramatic and imaginative play. They dressed up as different characters inspired from the Halloween Parade. The Woodchucks decided to put on a Disney heroes parade for the Spotted and Snowy Owls. The Woodchucks enjoyed a music circle with the Snowy Owls. Each Woodchuck paired up with one Snowy Owl and participated in dance and movement songs. They practiced kind and caring behavior with each other.

This month, the Woodchucks learned about farm animals. The Woodchucks learned to identify which animals live on the farm. They sorted their classroom animals into two categories: farm animals and wild animals. With guidance from their teachers, they created a classroom graph displaying their favorite farm animals.

During our Farm Unit, the Woodchucks learned a lot about cows. What do cows like to eat? What does the cow give us? They learned we get milk, yogurt, cheese and butter from cows! The Woodchucks pretended to milk a cow in the sensory table using rubber gloves filled with white paint – a super fun sensory activity that required lots of fine motor skills!

After milking the cow, the Woodchucks made fresh butter with their teachers and we tried it during snack time! The Woodchucks took turns measuring and pouring heavy whipping cream into a jar. They took turns shaking it until the liquid turned into a solid.... Butter! All of the Woodchucks were so curious and eager to open the jar! We peeked into the jar a few times to observe the liquid change into a solid. We observed the liquid first foamed before turning into a solid.

The Woodchucks participated in a number of science activities this month! The Woodchucks made corn kernels dance in a jar! With teacher direction, each Woodchuck was able to touch, feel and count corn kernels on the

classroom table. The Woodchucks took turns place the kernels into a jar filled halfway with water. We added a half cup of vinegar, a teaspoon of vinegar and observed how the corn continually jumps up and down in the jar! Dancing kernels!

The Woodchucks also explored with corn kernels and cranberries in the sensory table. We filled the sensory table with water and poured in the cranberries and kernels. The Woodchucks observed how the kernels sink down to the bottom, while the cranberries float on top. We extended this activity by removing the kernels and providing the Woodchucks with recycled bottles and spoons for the Woodchucks to fill with water and cranberries. This activity is a great example of early math and science, while encouraging sensory exploration and requiring hand-eye coordination!

This month, we transformed the dramatic play area into a laundry station! The Woodchucks pretended to wash baby clothes and used clothespins to hang and dry the clothes on a clothesline. A great fine motor activity!

The Woodchucks participated in a number of collaborative abstract art projects. They made collages using fabric and painted with q-tips. The Woodchucks also selected a number of classroom farm animals to walk through paint and across construction paper – creating animal tracks and abstract art! For Thanksgiving, the Woodchucks created turkey headbands and cards to take home and share with their families.

In the library, the Woodchucks took turns reading independently. We also brought the Woodchucks downstairs to the large, preschool library where they could select their favorite books to bring back to the classroom. During our library times, a teacher usually reads and acts out the story using puppets. We use this time as an opportunity to discuss kindness and teach the concept of sharing. The Woodchucks enjoy this time, especially because they each get a turn holding the classroom puppets and they each participate in a conversation about the story. We are so happy to see how well the Woodchucks are expressing their feelings, participating in conversations and learning to share. They are so curious and eager to

explore, learn and place! We are thankful for each of the Woodchucks and we look forward to more fun and learning next month!

Thank you for helping us grow and learn! If you need to contact us for any reason you can call the school or email us at [woodchucks@stepcare.net](mailto:woodchucks@stepcare.net).

Ms. Ama and Ms. Florenca

## *Parent Involvement*

*We love when family members volunteer their time in the classroom, but we know that's not always possible!*

*Here are some ways you can still participate:*

- Come in and read a book or participate in an art project! If you are interested, please let us know and we can let you know what dates and times work best for our schedule.
- Stop by the Public Library or bring a book from home about kindness to share with the Woodchucks!
- The Woodchucks love books on CD. Record your voice as you read your child their favorite book from home. You can bring in the recording or email it to the Woodchuck email. (Don't forget to bring in the book, too! We like to read along!)
- Bring in a batch of play-doh, silly putty, goop or slime! (We'll email you recipes! We also have recipe cards!) There is a sign-up sheet just outside of the classroom door.
- Share pictures from your weekend! The Woodchucks love to talk about fun and exciting moments outside of school!

## *Classroom Reminders*

*December is new toothbrush month! Please remember to bring in a new toothbrush for your child!*

- *Please remember to check your child's extra clothes bin!*
- *Please consider providing us with an updated family photo for the classroom family tree!*
- *Please send your child to school a warm hat and either gloves or mittens.*
- *Please encourage your child to wash or sanitize their hands before engaging in play! Make hygiene part of your morning routine!*

## *Next Month*

- *Acts of Kindness*
- *Abstract/Process Art*
- *Dramatic Play*
- *Fine and Gross Motor Development*
- *Self-Portraits*
- *Musical Instruments*
- *Dance Parties*
- *Singing*
- *Shapes*
- *Primary and Secondary Colors*

## *This month in the Squirrel classroom...*

Hello Squirrel families!

We began the month of November learning all about Transportation: Things that GO! The Squirrels helped us transform our Dramatic Play area into a train station! They used cardboard boxes, paper plates, paint, construction paper and tape! They had a blast taking turns as conductors, ticket punchers and passengers.

During Art, the Squirrels took turns painting with cars! Each Squirrel chose their favorite classroom car and drove it through a variety of paint colors and right onto construction paper – creating colorful paint tracks! We also taped markers to the back bumpers of the classroom cars and had the Squirrels drive the cars over construction paper – leaving marker tracks behind them!

Paint ramps were another hit this month! The Squirrels took turns driving their favorite classroom cars through paint and driving them down construction paper ramps! The Squirrels also used gears – similar to the gears found in their classroom transportation vehicles – to create colorful abstract art.

In the Block Area, the Squirrels enjoyed driving the classroom cars along zig zag tape roads, as well as a variety of shape roads!

The Squirrels were also provided with a number of textured ramps! The Squirrels were able to observe, compare and describe to their teachers and peers what happens to their vehicles when they drive down surfaces that are smooth or bumpy.

The Squirrels also made a number of ramp predictions! We collected a number of items from around the classroom and predicted whether or not the objects would roll down a wood block ramp.

We created a lot of graphs this month!

The Squirrels were provided with a number of transportation photographs and, together, we sorted them into three categories: air, land and water!

A second graph required the Squirrels to sort and count! The Squirrels worked together to sort the classroom transportation vehicles into categories of color, then we counted how many we had of each color!

The Squirrels even practiced measuring distances! The Squirrels sent their favorite classroom transportation vehicles down a ramp and measured the distance (in wood blocks) each vehicle traveled. Once everyone had a turn, we discussed which vehicle went the farthest, and which vehicle went the shortest distance.

The Squirrels participated in a number of sensory and early science activities this month – all related to the theme of transportation!

The Squirrels had a blast washing cars in two sensory tables – one filled with shaving cream (pretend soap!) and the other filled with water! The Squirrels pretended to wash

the classroom transportation vehicles in the sensory table filled with shaving cream, then rinsed them in the table of water. They placed the (now “clean”) transportation vehicles on a towel to dry.

The Squirrels also worked with their teachers to create pool noodle boats! The Squirrels worked to help create, balance and float the pool noodle boats in the water table. We even created popsicle stick and construction paper sails for them! We discussed what we need to do to make the boats float, and what factors cause the boats to fall over and sink.

The Squirrels were provided with magnet wands, which they used to “power and move” a number of classroom trains.

The Squirrels enjoyed and frequently requested to drive the classroom transportation vehicles over bubble wrap roads taped to the floor in the Block Area. As they drove the cars, they listened for the popping of the bubble wrap.

The Squirrels also took turns at a construction themed sensory table where they pushed rice and rocks around the table using classroom construction transportation vehicles, such as diggers and plows.

The Squirrels also participated in a number of fine and gross motor activities!

The Squirrels all played a “Stop, Slow and Go” movement game that required them to respond to visual cues – a great gross motor challenge that requires the Squirrels to practice impulse control – both on their feet and while driving classroom cars and tricycles in the gym.

The Squirrels also played a game called Stop Light Bean Bag toss that required them to toss red, yellow or green bean bags to the corresponding colors on a traffic light taped to the floor.

The Squirrels had a blast driving cars and tricycles through a PVC pipe car wash downstairs in the gym! The Squirrels also practiced the gym cars and tricycles along zig zag roads in the gym created with tape!

In the Dramatic Play area, the Squirrels continued to develop their fine motor skills by taking turns punching train tickets using single hole punches – so tricky, this required a lot of hand strength!

Other transportation fun this month included transportation literature, drawing on road maps, digging for Scrabble letters in the construction themed sensory table, an uppercase/lower case and car/parking spot matching activity and name trains.

We wrapped up the month of November with a short unit about Thanksgiving!

One of our feature books during our Thanksgiving unit was "Feeling Thankful" by Shelley Rotner. What does feeling thankful mean? This photographic essay is designed to give children an awareness of all they have to be thankful for; it's a great book for the season of Thanksgiving.

During Circle Time, the Squirrels have referred to November as "turkey month!" We've been reiterating the month is November, and on one day in November - Thanksgiving Day - some of us do happen to eat turkey – but not everyone! During our conversations, not only did we focus on kindness, but we spent a great deal of time discussing, reading and learning about thankfulness - a tricky concept! We talked about the things and people that make us happy, and therefore, we feel grateful for them. In preparation for our annual Grateful Feast, the Squirrels helped their teachers make mashed potatoes in a crock-pot to share with their friends and family! After thorough handwashing, with help from their teachers, they each used a plastic knife to chop up three pounds of red potatoes! We added a variety of delicious ingredients, including garlic, chicken stock, salt, pepper, butter, sour cream and milk. After a few hours in the crock-pot, each Squirrel took a turn mashing the potatoes with a potato masher! A big thank you to parents and families who were able to join us at the Grateful Feast today! The Squirrels had a blast sitting and eating with the Spotted Owls, friends and family.

Next month, the Squirrels will create a variety of abstract art and participate in a number of process art activities. We plan to have the Squirrels work in pairs of two to promote team building! The Squirrels will also complete their second set of self-portraits!

Thank you for helping us grow and learn! If you need to contact us for any reason, please call the school or email us at [squirrels@stepcare.net](mailto:squirrels@stepcare.net).

Ms. Aby and Ms. Marie

## *Parent Involvement*

*We love when family members volunteer their time in the classroom, but we know that's not always possible!*

*Here are some ways you can still participate:*

- Come in and join our Circle Time or participate in an Art Project!
- Stop by the Public Library or bring a book from home about kindness to share with the Squirrels!
- The Squirrels are BIG on books on CD. Record your voice as you read your child their favorite book from home! You can bring in the recording or email it to the Squirrel email. Don't forget to bring in the book, too!
- Bring in a batch of play-doh, silly putty, gak, guk, goop or slime! (We'll email you the recipes! We also have recipe cards!)

## *Classroom Reminders*

*December is new toothbrush month! Please remember to bring in a new toothbrush for your child!*

- *Please remember to check your child's extra clothes bin!*
- *Please consider providing us with an updated family photo for the classroom family tree!*
- *Please send your child to school with a warm hat and either gloves and/or mittens.*
- *Please encourage your child to wash or sanitize their hands before engaging in play! Make hygiene part of your morning routine!*

## *Next Month*

- *Acts of Kindness*
- *Abstract Art/Process Art*
- *Fine Motor Development*
- *Gross Motor Development*
- *Social/Emotional Development: Feelings and Emotions!*
- *Collaboration, Sharing and Working Together!*
- *Small Group Activities*
- *Team Building*
- *Self-Portraits*

## *This month in the Spotted Owl classroom...*

Hello Spotted Owl families!

I can't believe how fast this month has gone by!

Of course, it was a shorter month with Thanksgiving, which by the way, I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday!

The Spotted Owls had another great month which began with our photography unit! The Spotted Owls had so much fun taking photos with used cameras around the classroom and in the gym. We even made our own photo lab in our dramatic play area; it was a huge hit! It was exciting to see the Spotted Owls "developing" their own pictures; they really had a chance to see how pictures were created during earlier times.

We've made a few great recipes this month; it was so much fun to involve the Spotted Owls. We made play-doh together as a group project, which was available during choice time. This kind of activity allows the Spotted Owls to practice some early mathematics as they are practicing how to measure out ingredients and follow a recipe. We also made applesauce from scratch to share with families and friends at the Grateful Feast! The Spotted Owls were so excited when I told them they are contributing to the event by bringing their homemade applesauce. It was wonderful to see the smiles on their faces while they were making it! It smelt delicious! We had a wonderful time at the feast and I hope all who attended enjoyed the event, as well.

The classroom sensory table was open and available to the Spotted Owls with this month along with salt and scoops. The Spotted Owls continue to develop their fine motor skills as they explore the texture of the salt while using the scoops – again, lots of early mathematics as they practice measuring out the salt using the scoops!

Since the beginning of the year, I've learned the Spotted Owls absolutely love to sing! I'm always trying to use their love of singing to my own advantage! Together, we learned a new song and added some dance moves! We performed our song and dance for the whole school! I love to see their smiles when they are singing and having a great time performing! We've definitely enjoyed a number of dance parties. They continue to develop their gross motor skills as they dance – all while having a blast!

Downstairs in the gym, the Spotted Owls have participated in a number of really cool obstacle courses. It's so great to see them focus as they complete each part of the course. Lots of smiles on their face when they finish the course!

Please make sure to check out the portraits hanging up in the hallway! These portraits were made special by our Spotted and Snowy Owls! It was so much fun to combine the

two classrooms! We paired up two students from each classroom to paint a portrait of each other. We really have so many true artists at Stepping Stones!

The Spotted Owls have also impressed me once more with family portraits! I think you will love to see what goes on in your child's imagination once you see these! I love to let their minds and wrists go!

November was such a wonderful month for us in the classroom and I can't believe it is already over! December will be just as much fun – if not, more!

Thank you for helping us grow and learn! If you need to contact me for any reason you can call the school or email me at [spottedowls@stepcare.net](mailto:spottedowls@stepcare.net).

– Ms. Nikoleta

## *Parent Involvement*

*We love when family members volunteer their time in the classroom, but we know that's not always possible!*

*Here are some ways you can still participate:*

- Come in and read a book or participate in an art project! If you are interested, please let me know and I can provide you with some dates and times that work best for our busy schedule.
- Stop by the Public Library or bring in a favorite book from home to share with the Spotted Owls! We are looking for books about healthy bodies. You can volunteer your time and read to the class!
- Bring in a book on CD to share or a batch of play-doh, silly putty, goop or slime! (We can provide you with some of our favorite recipes!)

## *Classroom Announcements*

*December is new toothbrush month! Please remember to bring in a new toothbrush for your child!*

*Winter is almost here! Please remember to dress your child for the colder weather!*

*A special reminder to empty your child's art file every week!*

## *Classroom Reminders*

- *Please remember to check your child's extra clothes bin!*
- *Please consider providing us with an updated family photo for the classroom family tree!*
- *Please send your child to school with a warm hat and either gloves and/or mittens.*
- *Please encourage your child to wash or sanitize their hands before engaging in play! Make hygiene part of your morning routine!*
- *Spotted Owls may only bring one soft toy from home to rest or nap with.*

## *Next Month*

- *Acts of Kindness*
- *Self-Portraits*
- *Amusement Park Theme*

## *This month in the Snowy Owl classroom...*

Hi Snowy Owl families!

Happy December! November was a fun-filled month for all of us here in the Snowy Owl classroom! We started off the month by wrapping up our Ocean unit. After our Ocean unit, it was the perfect time to start a Health and Hygiene unit. To begin, all the Snowy Owls participated in a germ demonstration involving glitter. This demonstration taught the Snowy Owls how easily and quickly germs can spread. We brainstormed ways that we can keep our bodies healthy and the Owls started to identify a number of healthy foods they could eat. This provided an opportunity to discuss other ways to keep our bodies safe and healthy, including getting enough exercise throughout the day and rest at night. During this unit, the Snowy Owls participated in a number of gross motor activities and practiced proper hand washing techniques even more than we already do on a daily basis.

We had our annual Grateful Feast this month! I love this time of month. It provides an opportunity to discuss what we are thankful for and discuss all we appreciate in our lives. We made banana bread to share with all the classrooms and families during the feast. The Snowy Owls had a blast adding all the ingredients and mashing the bananas!

Stripes has finally made his way around to all the Snowy Owls! The Owls remained excited week after week as Stripes visited with all different families! The adventure binder is always in the classroom and available to the Owls to view at their leisure. I have more fun take-home activities in store for the Snowy Owls – so stay tuned!

We started a Music unit and will continue with this unit throughout the first week of December! The Snowy Owls will make a variety of musical instruments using recyclable materials! They will learn new songs and participate in parades and performances!

Thank you for helping us grow and learn! If you need to contact me for any reason you can call the school or email me at [owls@stepcare.net](mailto:owls@stepcare.net).

– Ms. Tamara

## *Parent Involvement*

*We love when family members volunteer their time in the classroom, but we know that's not always possible!*

*Here are some ways you can still participate:*

- Take a trip to the Public Library and bring in a book to share related to the unit we are learning about.
- Volunteer your time to read to the Snowy Owls or participate in an art project!

## *Special Thanks to...*

- Eliza for consistently volunteering her time to read to the Snowy Owls. Eliza continues to introduce us to new authors!
- The Lopez-Perez family for their shoe box donations
- The Lennox family for their musical instrument contribution

## *Classroom Reminders*

*December is new toothbrush month! Please remember to bring in a new toothbrush for your child!*

*Please make sure children are dropped off in a classroom with a teacher present. We begin each day in the Spotted Owl classroom and transition into the Snowy Owl classroom at 8:30 AM. In the mornings, please walk your child into the Spotted Owl classroom so a teacher can see your child and mark them present for the day.*

*We are encouraging your child to become more independent to prepare them for Kindergarten – and we need your help! The Owls accumulate a lot of art work throughout the day; please keep the cubbies decluttered by taking home all art work at the end of each day.*

## *Next Month*

- Acts of Kindness
- Self-Portraits
- Lower Case Identification
- Team Work Games
- Music
- Felt Board Stories

## *Upcoming Events*

### Pizza Day

Every Friday!

### Helping Hands Gifts Due

Wednesday, December 13

### Center Closed for Winter Break

Monday, December 25 –

Monday, January 1

## *Parent Opportunities*

- Laundry Volunteers! Any families interested in helping us wash some of our classroom materials (sheets, towels, pillow cases, etc.) can touch base with Maggie or Tara!
- Play-Doh Volunteers! We love to make (and toss) play-doh frequently! Those interested in making a batch at home to share with the classrooms can ask any teacher building for a recipe!

## *Upcoming Event*

### *Holiday Gingerbread House Workshop at Wilson's Farm*

Tuesday, December 14th at 2:30 PM

“Come down to the farm and decorate your very own holiday gingerbread house! Our award-winning bakery team will be on hand to help you along the way. [Cost is] \$50 per gingerbread house. Limit 4 people per house. **RSVP IS REQUIRED** and spots fill up fast. Call our office at 781-862-3900 now to reserve your spot today.”

## Around Town

### *Dad's 'N' Donuts* *Watertown Public Library*

Saturday, December 2 at 9:15 AM

*Skip the coffee shop and make the Children's Department part of your morning routine! Come to the library for some coffee, a donut hole, and to browse the newspaper while children explore books and color during our low-key morning program. Let's be clear: this program is open to all caregivers, not just dads. For families with children of all ages. No registration.*

### *3 and Up Story Time* *Watertown Public Library*

Monday, December 4, 11 and 18 at 10:15 AM

*This program presents stories, songs, and other activities in a fun environment. For ages 3 to 5. No registration.*

### *Matt Heaton Music* *Watertown Public Library*

Tuesday, December 12 at 10:15 AM

*Kid-friendly, original folk and surf-inspired songs with a few re-worked hits!*

### *Dragons Love Tacos* *Watertown Public Library*

Saturday, December 9 at 10 and 11 AM

*Powers Music School's Musical Storytelling Program visits our library to present Dragons Love Tacos. For ages 3 and up. No registration required.*

### *Launch Trampoline Park* 625 Pleasant Street in Watertown, MA

*Launch Trampoline Park is an indoor sports and family entertainment facility serving the Watertown area. With over 18,000 sq. feet of connected trampolines forming one GIANT jumping surface and angled trampoline walls to bounce off of, Launch will get your whole family off the couch and in the air in no time! No experience needed. Safety is their number one priority.*

### *KidSpace at Payson Park* *Church in Belmont, MA*

*KidSpace is a non-profit, parent-run, cooperative, indoor play space open to families with babies, toddlers and preschoolers. Visit [belmontkidspace.org](http://belmontkidspace.org) for more information.*

### *Inside Playground in* *Watertown, MA*

*Inside Playground creates its unique presence among other playgrounds by permitting the children to engage themselves in activities from morning to evening, seven days a week. This competence is provided for an affordable flat fee rather than subscribing a 1-hour weekly class that sometimes enforces restrictive regiment. All activities and equipment are kid-proof, and adhere to the strictest safety codes. The main aim of Inside Playground is to create a welcoming environment that will give each family the flexibility and comfort they need to learn and play within their own schedules at our four-season's indoor environment.*

*Celebrate your child's birthday or other special day, or just join us for a great day of playtime in the indoor comfort and safety of our Indoor Playground facility, open 7 days a week in Watertown, MA. Your children will enjoy both, Fine & Gross Motor activities such as: inflated bounce, play-cars, children's gym equipment, books, puzzles, Legos, miniature furniture, dolls, dress up, lights & magnets exploring, and games with friends and family, as well as weekly special activities led by professionally trained staff – we have a snack area for any foods brought in or purchased onsite from our snack, drink and ice cream vending machines. WIFI-accessible for parents' laptops, too! Shoes are not allowed on the premises, and parking is always FREE!*

## *This Winter: Ice Skating, Sledding and Tubing*

### **Outdoor Ice Skating Lessons for Children and Families in Greater Boston**

By Audrey Trieschman

Outdoor ice skating rinks are great for some fun, unstructured time, but if your budding skater dreams of forward skating, backward skating, stops, edges, crossovers, turns and Mohawks, some formal instruction may be just the thing. Lessons are offered at most of the [outdoor rinks](#) featured in our related post, and three skating schools also provide lessons at indoor rinks in the area. We've highlighted these skating schools and lesson options below; schedules, registration forms and pricing details can be found on the rink or school websites.

#### The Skating Club of Boston

617-78-SKATE

Outdoor lessons at Boston Common's [Frog Pond](#) are provided by The Skating Club of Boston, which offers 6-10 weeks of Basic Skills lessons beginning the first week of December. Prices run from \$128 for 6 lessons.

The Skating Club of Boston also offers lessons at rinks in [Boston](#) (1240 Soldiers Field Road), [Foxboro](#) (10 E. Belcher Road) and [Marlborough](#) (121 Donald Lynch Blvd).

#### Bay State Skating School

781-890-8480

Outdoor lessons at the Jack Killare Rink at Larz Anderson Park are provided by Bay State Skating School.

The Bay State Skating School also teaches lessons at indoor rinks in Brookline (Cleveland Circle), Cambridge, Medford, Newton/Brighton, Quincy, Somerville, South Boston, Waltham, West Roxbury, and Weymouth. Classes range from four to 10 sessions and are available for recreational, figure, and ice hockey, depending on location and schedule.

#### Kendall Square Learn to Skate School

Lessons at the Kendall Square Community Rink focus on skating basics. Five-lesson packages cost \$120-\$130 and are offered starting in December for both adults and children.

#### FMC Ice Sports

888-74-SKATE

For indoor lessons, FMC Ice Sports offers Learn to Skate and Hockey programs at 23 locations in Massachusetts, including 18 DCR rinks. Locations include Simioni Skating Arena (Cambridge), Porrazzo Memorial Rink (East Boston), Cronin Skating Arena (Revere), Burlington Ice Palace (Burlington), and the Chelmsford Forum (Chelmsford).

### **Top Spots for Sledding and Tubing with Preschoolers in Greater Boston**

By Kim Foley

Racing down snowy hills on a sled or tube is one of the joys of winter—one that requires no skill, little equipment, and it's something even the youngest in the family can enjoy. In the Boston area and not too far outside of Boston, there are many options. Here are our top picks.

#### **SLEDDING**

In the Boston area, favorite spots for sledding include:

- The Arnold Arboretum;
- The hills next to Jamaica Pond; and
- Larz Anderson Park.

#### ***Not too far outside of Boston:***

#### Borderland State Park

This Department of Conservation and Recreation property in North Easton is a 1,773-acre park with cultural, historical, and natural resources and offers great sledding hills. Sometimes you can even ice-skate on the ponds here (call ahead to ask).

#### World's End

There are four hills to sled on at this Hingham Trustees of Reservations property, but Planter's—the large drumlin rising just before you cross "The Bar" to the far side of the reservation—is the best. From the summit, you can zip down the footpath.

#### Crane Estate

You may think of the Crane Estate in Ipswich as a summer destination, but there's a gentle, undulating, half-mile long Grand Allée, which provides excellent family-friendly sledding terrain.

#### **SNOW TUBING**

#### Amesbury Sports Park

This sports park offers 1,000 tubes and many lanes of groomed snow for downhill thrills. The park features a standing conveyor belt to help you up the hills and a lodge for warming up and snacks. Most tubing parks have an age restriction of six and up, but here kids as young as four can tube, as long as they wear a helmet and go with an adult. Bring helmets with you.

#### Ski Ward

With eight lanes, 200 tubes, and two lifts, snow tubing at Ski Ward in Shrewsbury is a blast. For an extra thrill—one that kids especially like—go at night. By the way, the end of winter doesn't mean the end of tubing. Ski Ward also offers summer tubing.

#### Nashoba Valley's Snow Tubing Park

This is the largest tubing park in New England, with as many as 18 lanes available and more than 600 snow tubes on site. An easy tow-handle lift brings you to the top of the hill, where you can decide which lane you'd like to try. Don't worry about making a wrong decision. Tickets are good for two hours, so you and the kids can try them all. The tubing park has an on-site lodge with a snack bar where you can take a break and warm up.

## Good Reads

### W-Sitting and Your Child's Growth

By Marissa Edwards, M.S., OTR/L is a licensed Occupational Therapist at North Shore Pediatric Therapy. She graduated from Rush University in Chicago with her Master of Science in Occupational Therapy, and decided to focus her career in pediatrics. Clinically, she works with children birth to adolescent, with a variety of diagnoses impacting skill development and daily function. She enjoys working with all children, especially through providing sensory integration therapy.

“W-sitting” is a position that is too commonly used by children when seated on the ground. In this position, a child sits on their bottom, with knees bent, feet tucked under, and legs splayed out to each side in a “W” configuration. Because this position is so common, most adults do not realize that use of this position can have negative ramifications on children’s growth and development.

#### Negative Effects Of “W” Sitting

The reality is that this position can cause orthopedic problems, delay development of postural control and stability, and delay development of refined motor skills. For these reasons, its use is strongly discouraged.

Excessive use of a “W-sit” during the growing years puts undue stress on the hip abductors, hamstrings, internal rotators and heel cords, leading to the possibility of orthopedic problems in the future. “W-sitting” can lead to hip dislocation, and for children with pre-existing orthopedic conditions, these conditions can worsen when major muscle groups are placed in shortened positions. The muscles begin to tighten, and this can lead to a permanent shortening of the muscle, which can affect coordination, balance, and development of motor skills.

The “W-sit” widens a child’s base of support, resulting in less need for weight shifting, postural control and stability as they are playing, moving and reaching than in other seated positions. In addition to resulting in decreased trunk control, the “W-sit” does not require as much trunk rotation, which helps develop midline crossing and separation of the two sides of the body needed for bilateral coordination. Good trunk control and stability, midline crossing and bilateral coordination are needed to develop refined motor skills and hand dominance. Children require the opportunities to develop more mature movement patterns in order to develop higher level skills.

#### How to Prevent “W” Sitting

It is best to prevent children from developing this habit. However, we all know children who have already established this as a preferred seated position. When possible, anticipate and catch it before you see your child move into a “W-sit”. If and when you do see your child in a “W”, consistently encourage her to adjust to a different position by saying, “Fix your legs.”

Consistency is key. Make sure children know what some of their other options are so they can choose an alternative. Functional seated positions that will allow the child to develop trunk control and mature movement patterns include “tailor sit” (also called “criss-cross”), “long sit” and “side sit.” [Here at Stepping Stones, you’ll hear teachers use “criss-cross applesauce, pretzel legs or even french fry legs!] It is important for parents to teach and encourage alternate seated positions at home, and teachers to teach and encourage their students to use alternate seated positions at school. This encouragement will have positive effects on a child’s growth and development of foundational skills.



# POP-IN PLAY AT STEPPING STONES

*Looking for a fun way to fill your Sunday morning?*

As the weather gets cooler we are all looking for more indoor options to help our children get their energy out! Why not bring your child to a favorite and familiar place – our gym! Families will have full use of our equipment and materials, as well as a chance to build relationships with other Stepping Stones families! These events will not be supervised by Stepping Stones staff. This is an opportunity for families to interact and FUN!

**Small groups for easy supervision!**

**Opportunities to connect with other families!**

**Ball pit, swings, bicycles and more!**

**Clean, safe and familiar environment!**

**Fun for all ages!**

## **SUNDAYS**

**9 AM - 12 PM**

Ages 15 months and up

Siblings welcome!

\$10 per family

See your monthly calendar for open dates!