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NEWSLETTER

From the Director's chair...



Issue 1.

Hello Stepping Stones families!

What an exciting and fun-filled month for our preschoolers!

We had a wonderful time meeting new families and catching up with old! We've enjoyed watching the children settle into their morning routines; they're all really enjoying their time here! Our teachers are hard at work documenting and sharing all the fun your children have here at school. Please take a moment to look around your child's classroom to see all the wonderful art they've created and the activities they've participated in!

Another great way to take a closer look at all the going-ons in our preschool classrooms is to visit our Shutterfly share site! We upload pictures regularly to give you a glimpse at just some of the exciting activities that fill our day! All families should have received an invitation to become a member of the share site; but if you did not, please let us know so we can get you on our member list!

This October, Stepping Stones plans to host our annual Cradles to Crayons Warm Winter Coat Drive. Unfortunately for children in need, staying warm is a struggle both indoors and out. We plan to collect warm layers for local children in need, including winter jackets, snow pants, hats, gloves, mittens and boots to donate to Cradles to Crayons.

We have a few family events coming up in October! Be sure to keep an eye out for upcoming dates and family volunteer opportunities! We are currently looking for family volunteers to read a Fall story at our annual Family Trip to Drumlin Farms!

- Elizabeth, Maggie and Tara

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 season!
- 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.
- It’s always hat season here at Stepping Stones. Please send your child with a sun AND warm hat every day.
- Check your family mailbox regularly.

Upcoming Dates and Events

Pizza Day

Every Friday!

Columbus Day – Center Closed

Monday, October 9

Family Day at Drumlin Farm

Sunday, October 15
(Details to come!)

Cradles to Crayons Warm Winter Coat Drive

Tuesday, October 10 –
Friday, October 13

Family Yard Sale

Saturday, October 14
(Details to come!)

Parents’ Night Out

Saturday, October 21

Halloween Parade

Tuesday, October 31
(Details to come!)

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:

- Felt Board Stories!
- Dance Party and Nap Time CDs!
- Books on Tape!
- 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, etc.!
- Plastic Bags!
- Durable plastic bottles!
- Glass Jars (Pickle, Sauce, etc.)
- Shoe Boxes
- Cardboard Boxes (Any size!)
- Bells
- Old digital cameras
- Scrap paper for drawing

This month in the Woodchuck classroom...

Hi Woodchuck families!

Happy Fall!

The Woodchucks have really enjoyed spending time with old and familiar friends as well as some new friends! To help the Woodchucks smoothly adjust to the new building, schedule, routines, and teachers, we planned fun activities in the classroom, in the gym and outside on the playground.

This month, the Woodchucks participated in a lot of dramatic and imaginative play. They pretended to be chefs and cooked a variety of food for friends and teachers in the kitchen area. The Woodchucks also had a blast pretending to be doctors, so we transformed our dramatic play area into a doctor's office. They used stethoscopes, thermometers and blood pressure monitors to treat their friends and stuffed animals. They even gave each other pretend shots! (No tears!) They all demonstrated kind and caring behavior. We continued to encourage play as a form of learning as it encourages the Woodchucks to practice prosocial behavior.

The Woodchucks participated in a variety of collaborative art projects and created a lot of abstract pieces including collages, puffy paint, chalk drawings and painting using tooth brushes. They also traced a friend's body with markers and painted with their favorite colors.

The Woodchucks got their hands messy by making a fresh batch of play-doh. They explored many ways to use play-doh in daily learning activities. They made cupcakes and they practiced flossing "food" (play-doh) between the "teeth" of a Lego piece. They also made their own creatures and we counted them together. The Woodchucks completed their first set of self-portraits this month! The Woodchucks were asked to look in a handheld mirror, choose a marker and draw themselves! With their permission, we labeled their portraits and document everything they say as they create. We have the Woodchucks create a self-portrait every three months. We love to look back and see how their portraits change over time!

This month, the Woodchucks learned all about health, hygiene, and safety! Specifically, how to wash their hands the proper way, how to brush teeth, cover coughs and sneezes, cut with safety scissors and more! We are so happy to see how the Woodchucks following the classroom rules, walking on the white line to and from the playground, sharing and taking turns with each other. They are such big kids! They are so curious and eager to explore, learn and play! We just know it's going to be a fun and successful year!

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.

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 tell you which times work best for the schedule.

- Stop by the Public Library or bring a book from home about kindness or Fall to share with the Woodchucks!

– The Woodchucks 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 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 the recipes! We also have recipe cards!) There is a sign-up sheet just outside of our classroom door.

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 both a sun and warm hat.*
- *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*
- *Music*
- *Fall*
- *Halloween*

This month in the Squirrel classroom...

Hello Squirrel families!

Happy Fall! We had a GREAT first month of school!

The Squirrels have really enjoyed spending time with old and familiar friends, as well as some new friends! We planned some really fun and engaging activities for the Squirrels as they adjusted to the new building, schedule, routines and teachers.

This month, the Squirrels participated in a lot of dramatic and imaginative play. They created artwork for their portfolios, built tall towers in the block area, explored a variety of materials and textures in the sensory table (including a pond water table and cupcake baking) and explored light, prism effects, color mixing and more on the light table and overhead projector!

The Squirrels participated in a variety of process art and created a lot of abstract pieces, including painting at the classroom graffiti wall, collages and “no mess” Ziploc finger-painting – just to name a few!

The Squirrels also learned all about health, hygiene and safety! Specifically, how to brush teeth, cover coughs and sneezes, cut with safety scissors and more!

During Circle Time, the Squirrels learned all about their new classroom pet: Nemo, the male beta fish! They learned how to care for Nemo, as well as the classroom plants. We introduced them to the Mr. Potato Head Classroom Rules, their classroom jobs and our yacker tracker classroom traffic light! We’ve been teaching and practicing safe classroom transitions to the gym and outside – walking in a line can be tricky business – but they’re all working hard and doing a great job using their listening ears so we can all travel safely throughout the school.

The Squirrels completed their first set of self-portraits this month! The Squirrels were asked to look in a handheld mirror, choose a marker and draw themselves! With their permission, we labeled their portraits and documented anything they said as they created. We have the Squirrels

complete a self-portrait every three months. We love to look back and observe how their portraits have changed over time! (We'll send them all home to you at the end of the year!)

We are so excited about this particular group of kiddos! They are all so curious and eager to explore, learn and play! We observed this group LOVES to pretend they are animals and bakers. We transformed our dramatic play area into a classroom bakery this month! The Squirrels helped us create the bakery and did a great job taking turns pretending to be sweet treat bakers, cashiers and customers! We just know it's going to be a fun and successful year!

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.

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 or Fall 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

- *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 both a sun and warm hat.*
- *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*
 - *Fine Motor Development: Cutting, Taping and Hole Punching*
 - *Gross Motor Development: Obstacle Courses and Monkey Bar Challenges*
 - *Social/Emotional Development: Feelings and Emotions!*
- Collaboration, Sharing and Working Together!*

This month in the Spotted Owl classroom...

Happy fall Spotted Owl Families...

What a wonderful start to the new school year, I cannot believe September is already over! This month has been all about adjusting, transitioning and familiarizing ourselves with the daily routines, schedule, space, peers and teachers. Thank you for all of your help in trying to make those transitions a bit easier, it is much appreciated!

The spotted owls began the month of September by getting to know their classroom with a tour by yours truly and also became familiar with some new faces to the classroom. During the first week of school, I laid out multiple different activities for the Spotted Owls to see what each individual was interested in. It was super helpful and will make for an exciting school year knowing what keeps them engaged.

We have quite a few different areas in the classroom for the children to choose from, from block area to the art table to dramatic play which seems to be the most popular!

The block area this month consisted of castle building for our castle themed week! It was great to see the children working together with their partners to create a masterpiece. Train sets and lego building have also been a huge hit! We love working in small groups in the block area as it allows us to practice the important skills of sharing, working together and problem solving!

The art table is a wonderful place for the Spotted Owls to get creative and also work on their fine motor skills. We have been practicing using scissors in a safe manner as well as even getting a little crazy and coloring under the table. This is a great activity for building arm strength and wrist strength and control – which are both important pre-writing skills! We have also made our own play-dough and worked with modeling clay which the children really seem to enjoy. These activities allow us to build hand strength and finger dexterity, all while having fun and being creative.

Dramatic play is a real hit in our classroom. September consisted of writing our own “kind” story. While writing the story, we learned that a story has a beginning, middle and end as well different characters. Each owl was able to

take a turn in adding their part to the story. We then brought it to real life by creating puppets and putting on our own individual shows in teams of two with our theatre. I was so impressed with my Spotted Owl friends who all patiently waited for their turn to put on a show.

During the last week of September, we had our “healthy bodies” unit. The Spotted Owls and I discussed different ways in which we can keep our bodies feeling good! The one specific body part I chose to focus on were the lungs. The Spotted Owls had so much fun tracing each other’s body and familiarizing themselves with where the lungs belong by writing “LUNG” in its place. Along with that, we explored a vision test which was useful in the children practicing writing their letters/letter identification. We also worked on graphing the favorite snack of all the children at Stepping Stones which allowed the Spotted Owls to get to know some of the other children in the Squirrel/Woodchuck rooms as well as waiting their turn to ask the survey questions. Of course, we graphed it all together in our own classroom which involved some number counting.

Overall, I am very proud of all of my Spotted Owl friends. They have been having a lot of fun and my plan is to keep that going all year long! Thank you again for all of your help in helping us grow.

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.

– 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 us know and I can provide you with some times work best for our schedule.
- Stop by the Public Library or bring a favorite book from home to share with the Spotted Owls! We are look for books on healthy bodies. You can volunteer your time and read to the class!
- Bring in a batch of play-doh, silly putty, goop or slime! (We can provide you with some recipes!)

Classroom Announcements

Happy Birthday, Isla!

~A special thank you to Maureen (Luke and Lily's Mom) for bring in multiple puzzles and games for our Spotted Owl friends

Classroom Reminders

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

Next Month

~Continuing our "healthy bodies" unit with a specific focus on the heart
~Scarecrow content
~Halloween parade

This month in the Snowy Owl classroom...

Hi Snowy Owl families!

We had a great start to the school year! The month of September was all about adjusting, transitioning and familiarizing ourselves to new routines, schedules, spaces, peers and teachers. With consistency and the help of the families, it appears we have all adjusted so well and so quickly.

We started off the month with a “Getting to Know You” unit. During this unit, consistency, patience and guidance were key. Having structure and routine, while also allowing plenty of room for exploration and discovery made for a great first week! This was a great opportunity not only for me to get to know the Owls better, but for them to learn more about each other, as well. Through activities and games, we really enjoyed our time together. Next, we focused on our “Transportation” unit. This unit really sparked all of the Owls’ interest as they had so much to share about what they already knew about various types of transportation. We learned about hot air balloons and how they rise, how a variety of boats operate, etc. The train station dramatic play area was a popular choice during this week.

The Snowy Owls have many favorite centers in the classroom. The Owls are having a blast rotating between the block area, art table and dramatic play area. They are building with blocks, making silly Mr. Potato Head creations, racing cars and building intricate Lego structures. At the art table, they’ve created a number of projects, including free art and watercolors; they’ve also worked with a variety of doughs. The Snowy Owls particularly enjoy creating using tape scissors.

In the gym, the Owls have participated in a number of parachute games, including “Boa Constrictor” and “Keep the Ball Up!” They also enjoyed a number of self-regulation games, including “Red Light, Green Light” and “What Time Is It, Mr. Fox?” They also love the new gym swings and are doing a great job taking turns and giving each other safe pushes.

During the first week of school, I introduced the Snowy Owls to our owl friend named Stripes. They are all so eager to go on a number of adventures with Stripes! The look on their faces when they find out it’s their turn to

take Stripes home for the weekend is priceless! A big thank you to families for signing up and taking part in the excitement! I cannot wait to hear about all the adventures Stripes will go on!

The Owls are currently enjoying a Building and Construction unit – so exciting! We will practice safely holding and handling real tools and expand our creativity by building with some nontraditional materials... We are all looking forward to exploring the construction dramatic play area!

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.

– 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 library and bring in a book related to the unit we are learning about.
- Come join us to read or do a project.
- Make a batch of play-doh and send it in!

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 both a sun and warm hat.*
- *Please encourage your child to wash or sanitize their hands before engaging in play! Make hygiene part of your morning routine!*
- *Check your child's art mailbox weekly; they fill up quickly!*

Next Month

- *Acts of Kindness*
- *Building and Construction Unit*
- *Holding and Handling Tools*
- *Nontraditional Building Materials*
- *Adventures of Stripes, the Classroom Owl*

Upcoming Events

Pizza Day

Every Friday!

Columbus Day – Center Closed

Monday, October 9

Family Day at Drumlin Farm

Sunday, October 15

Cradles to Crayons Warm Winter Coat Drive

Tuesday, Oct. 10 – Friday, Oct. 13

Family Yard Sale

Saturday, October 14

Parents' Night Out

Saturday, October 21

Halloween Parade

Thursday, October 31

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!

Good Reads

8 Ways to Keep Your Kids Safe on Halloween

1. Make sure costumes are safe. For example, costumes should be fire retardant, and makeup should be non-toxic so it doesn't cause skin irritation or rashes. Children should be able to see and breathe through masks without obstruction, so eyeholes should be at least two times bigger than your child's eyes. Knives or swords should not be pointy; they should be made out of cardboard or other flexible materials.

2. Light them up. Twice as many kids get hit by cars on Halloween than any other night of the year so consider placing reflective material on your child's costumes so cars can easily spot them. They should also use flash lights or glow sticks to see where they're going if they're in a dark neighborhood.

3. Eat dinner and hold off on the candy. There's nothing wrong with eating candy on Halloween, but kids should eat dinner before indulging and not be permitted to eat candy until their parents inspect it.

4. Know numbers. If kids are not with a grown-up or are without a cell phone, they need to have their home address memorized along with an emergency phone number.

5. Walk the right way. If there is no sidewalk, walk toward oncoming cars, not in the same direction as the cars are moving. Don't ride a bike or wear rollerblades.

6. Have a buddy system. Kids need to keep each other in check by being accountable to one another. And nobody should be permitted to enter a stranger's house.

7. Review fire safety. With candles and jack-o-lanterns at every turn, kids can get burned. Make sure they know the "Stop, Drop and Roll" rule.

8. Make your home safe for trick-or-treaters. Consider trimming bushes, removing flower pots, making sure outdoor lights are working properly and secure pets.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/31/halloween-safety_n_6082276.html

Around Town

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

Saturday, October 7 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, October 2 and 16 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, October 17 at 10:15 AM

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

Drop-In Craft *Watertown Public Library*

Saturday, October 14 at 10:15 AM

We will have assorted materials available for you to make and take home a fun and simple craft at your leisure. No registration.

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 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!

Help Your Child Become a Better Friend

Four- to six-year-olds are learning what it means to be a friend. They will have fun times as well as arguments and hurt feelings. It can be tempting for parents to try to solve these problems themselves or by talking with the other child's parent. Instead, guide your child to solve problems. With your help, your child can learn how to solve social problems.

- 1. Help your child understand the other child's point of view.
"I guess Suzie wants a turn too."*
- 2. Teach your child the following:*
 - o Stay calm*
 - o Do not hit, grab, or shove*
- 3. Use words:*
 - o "I get upset when you talk to me like that."*
 - o "I'm sad you don't want to play with me."*
 - o "I'm angry you took the ball from me."*
- 4. Stand close by and watch as the children solve their problem. Being close by puts the children on their best behavior. This is how they begin to develop the confidence and skills to communicate honestly, calmly, and politely with others.*

Source: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/preschool/Pages/Growing-Independence-Tips-for-Parents-of-Young-Children.aspx>

Thanks for reading!

