



Baby Gator Tales

Director's Message Pamela J. Pallas, Ph.D., Director

When Baby Gator needs assistance, we can always count on Baby Gator families and the university to help out! The *Digging the Love* event on February 14 was a huge success. Over 200 families, friends, and supporters of Baby Gator enjoyed an evening of good food and good fun. Soccer Coach Becky Bailey served as MC and encouraged good natured bidding wars over paintings and stained glass from local artists, relaxing vacation packages, and a Gator tailgating package. Guests also bid generously on over 50 silent auction items and pledged donations for playground equipment. At the end of the evening, \$21,000 had been raised. Coupled with a \$20,000 gift from the Rosengren family, we are ready to get started on playground renovations. Soon you should be seeing backhoes and dirt movers at Lake Alice and Newell as we remove concrete and asphalt and install grass, sand, and wood play structures. This could not have happened without generous donations from over 100 local businesses, Baby Gator Advisory Board members, and Baby Gator families, and wonderful support from UF, including the staff of the Presidents House, the Human Resource Ser-

vices Department, University Police Department, IFAS and the UF Foundation. I see the outcome of such kindness and support in our classrooms everyday; teachers who are proud to work here and children who enjoy learning here. Thank you.

So, mark your calendars for next year's event, *Building the Love*, February 13, 2014. Once again, Chris Machen and Danette Good will host us at the President's House, Coach Bailey will MC and Dean Cacciatore will create his delicacies. Our first event planning meeting will be in June. If you would like to help out please contact me at ppallas@ufl.edu.

Farewell....

We bid fond farewell to Jazmin Herbert this month. Jazmin joined the Baby Gator teaching staff in 2003 and over the years became a part-time administrator, then an assistant director. It was a pleasure to see her grow professionally over the years. Her dedication to Baby Gator children and families was evident every day. She will be sorely missed. We wish her well in her new home in Maryland.

Baby Gator Child Development and Research Center at the University of Florida

April 2013
 Volume 4, Issue 1

Inside this issue:

Lake Alice	2
Upcoming Events	9
PK Yonge	11
Newell Drive	12
ASL	22
PHITKids	23
Music Program	24
Graduation	27

Lesson Plan Themes

May
 Marvelous Month of Movement

June
 Water, Water Everywhere!

July
 Passport Around the World



Lake Alice —Tiny Gators

Greetings from Tiny Gators!

We would like to welcome our newest babies, Bailey, Isu, Bryce, Alice, Nora, Lilla and Lucas. Even though they are the youngest friends they are growing fast!! Their smiles show they are happy here!

We have had many babies move up to Tiger Lilies; Scott, Jack, Marko, and Keely. They are enjoying their new room and we are so proud of their progress.

We would like to thank those of you who have donated things from our classroom wish list. As always, your support of our classroom is greatly appreciated.

As we start the season, we look forward to new and exciting activities. Drop by anytime to join in the fun!!

Tiny Gators,

Drew, Ethel, Linda, Robin, and Ashley



Modeling—see how I can drink from a sippy cup!



Claire-bunny!



Music time

"There was a star danced, and under that was I born."

- William Shakespeare

Lake Alice—Little Gators 1: Tiger Lilies



The Tiger Lilies have been very busy these past couple of months. We welcome Mrs. Madelyn to the Tiger Lily classroom and we are very happy to have her with us contributing to all of the fun and exciting activities we have been experiencing. We have been singing, dancing, reading, and crafting like crazy

through these past couple of months. Many of the children have also taken their first steps and are saying several words.

In January, we bundled up for our "Ice Ice Baby" theme. We made footprint snowmen, polar bears and snow owls. We got to feel the cold chill of ice on our little fingers and play with soft warm cotton balls to show the fluffiness of polar bears and other winter creatures.



were delicious on our little taste buds. Finally we got to "March through Literacy." During this month we took adventures with our imagination through Cat in the Hat, One Fish Two Fish, The Hungry Caterpillar, The Very Busy Spider, and many more amazing stories.

We got to use all of our senses this month from listening, to touching, and seeing.

Lastly, we went through a big transition. We have a classroom of all new friends - it is pleasure getting know them and the children are having loads of fun with each other. We will miss our old friends also who have grown up to be great "big kids".



We got our cupid arrows out when it came to February and the theme was "All You Need Is Love." We showed our feelings of love by creating books about our family and what we love about them, and books about our favorite animals. Also, we decided to get messy and make sweetheart pops that



Alyssa and Madelyn

Lake Alice—Little Gators 1: Orange Blossoms & Sunflowers

Hello everyone!

It has been an exciting year so far and we have seen a lot of changes already in the Orange Blossoms and Sunflowers classrooms. We would like to welcome some of our most recent children - Chloe, Yolin, and Justin. It is so nice to have you in our room. You are all awesome.



In the month of January our theme was "Ice, Ice Baby" and we explored different ways to turn water into ice. We colored water with paint and experienced the sensation of "cold". We introduce a color and a shape each month. January's color was blue and the shape was a diamond.

Our lessons in February were centered around the theme of (you guessed it!) "All You Need is Love". We all worked in many different ways to show our feelings. We held hands and made hearts from our hands as a gift to

the parents - hope you all enjoyed them. February's color was pink and the shape was a heart, of course!

Our theme for March was "Marching Through Literacy" The children love to hear stories so we learned through reading our favorite books - "Mary Had a Little Lamb", "The Hungry Caterpillar", and many others. We also focused on sensory activities and art projects to help the little ones explore their world through touch. March's color was green and the shape was a shamrock.

As always, thanks for your support—we appreciate all you do.

Lisa and Kristie



"You are you. Now, isn't that pleasant?" - Dr. Seuss

Lake Alice—Little Gators 2: Dandelions & Magnolias

Hello from the Dandelions class!

The winter months were an exciting time in the Dandelion classroom! In, January we learned all about the cold! We went "ice fishing" and "ice skating" one week. Then, the next week we learned all about Aurora Borealis and different winter animals! We used scarves and flash lights to simulate the Aurora Borealis - the children loved seeing all the different colors dancing around the room.



February was a very fun month! Ms. Febi from the Grasshopper's classroom came to our classroom to help out! We have really enjoyed having Ms. Febi in our room. We learned all

about our feelings and Valentine's Day! Our class had a really great Valentine's Day party! We made cupcakes and handed out valentines to all of our friends! It was a very fun day! The rest of the month, we learned about our feelings and friendship. We played a fun friendship matching game and a friendship bean bag toss. The children loved passing the bean bags to their friends!

In March we learned about spring, St. Patrick's Day, and different books! One week we learned all about

Dr. Seuss! We centered our lessons on different books by Dr. Seuss. Everyone in the class loved *Green Eggs and Ham*; we even made our own green eggs and ham! We had a fun time making our Leprechauns and Shamrocks for St. Patrick's



Day! The last week in March we learned about spring. We learned about different flowers, caterpillars, learned our numbers by hopping from lily pads, and we went on a pleasurable spring walk!

Amber and Febi



Lake Alice—Growing Gators: Grasshoppers

Cheers from the Grasshoppers!

It was a happy and fun early 2013. Beginning in January, we explored All Things Cold, the winter season, different kinds of weather events, and we pretended that we were "cold paleontologists" uncovering arctic animals in frozen ice.



In February, we used the theme "All You Need is Love" to talk about friendships and doing kind things for others. The Grasshoppers explored their emotions and participated in literacy activities that helped them build vocabulary and word recognition skills around the topics that related directly to their daily lives and experiences. They explored what it means to have feelings via movement, singing, artistic creations, talking, and listening. We celebrated Valentine's Day with a super cool Sock Hop where we had fun dressing up in

50's attire, dancing to the oldies and eating soda fountain sweets. It was a Rockin Good time!



To celebrate Groundhog Day, we made Punxsutawney Phil pop-up puppets to learn about groundhogs, hibernation, and forecasting spring's arrival. February also let the G-HOPS have big fun with a Mardi Gras parade. Donning handmade brightly-colored crowns and masks, the Grasshoppers marched and played instruments parading through Baby Gator shouting good wishes to all their friends.

In March, the Grasshoppers enjoyed "Marching through Literacy" by celebrating Dr. Seuss' birthday. We read lots of Dr. Seuss books and celebrated his wit by dressing up in

silly socks, silly hats, and even had a backwards/mismatch day and pajama day.

In April and May, the Grasshoppers will be busy little bees celebrating spring with all kinds of artistic and fun activities. We will celebrate Earth Day and learn about recycling and being kind to "Mother Earth". Look for more information about our "Junk Evolution" art exhibition that will feature unique environmental, nature and waste-based creations.



Sherrie, Febi and Lisa

Lake Alice—Growing Gators: Bumblebees

The past few months have just flown by in the Bumblebee class.



After winter break we returned back to school with a lot of energy and enthusiasm. We spent a week discussing how bears hibernate in the winter then we reenacted the classic nursery rhyme "Goldilocks and the Three Bears". We finished up the week with a visit to the "bear caves" by Corry Village. We also discussed MLK and what it means to be fair and kind to one another.



February we were busy little bees celebrating President's Day, Black History Month and Valentine's Day. For President's Day the children learned about money, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. For Black History we learned about the man who invented peanut butter, cracked open peanuts then ate them. Our Valentine's Day party was a hit and the children enjoyed the yummy treats.



In March our class was visited by a tiny Leprechaun named Larry who rewarded our good behavior by turning toys into gold! He was very sneaky -- we never got a good look at him. The "Very Hungry Caterpillar" was the main topic of discussion in March. We made a story sequence necklace with dyed pasta and the



foods from the story. Then the children made a mixed media caterpillar and talked about what they would do if they were a caterpillar.

Spring is here and the Bumble Bees are learning about things that grow. We started a vegetable garden and learned about what plants need to grow and thrive. Children learned about trees and how plants have to compete for resources like water and sunlight by playing the "Every Tree For Itself" game.



We were sorry to see Ms. Dorothy leave Baby Gator but we wish her well and are very happy to have Ms. Liz join our class. Please welcome her!

Donna & Liz



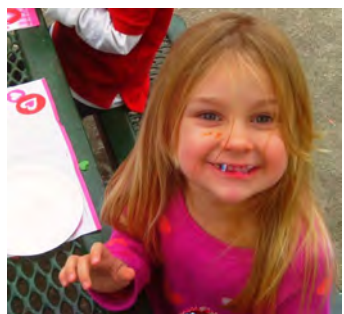
Lake Alice—Growing Gators: Dragonflies



The Dragonflies welcomed the New Year by discussing what we would like to do in the upcoming year. Some of us wanted to bake chocolate chip cookies while others wanted to make new friends, and a few wanted to visit Disney (which came true already)! During the month of January, we learned all about snowflakes, snowmen, snow animals, and snowy places. We created some really cool snowflakes using marshmallows and toothpicks - they served as a yummy snack for later! While talking about cold foods, we got to go on a field trip to Freshens Frozen Yogurt at the Reitz Union. The Dragonflies got to enjoy their frozen treat with rainbow sprinkles! We also did a flavored ice cube taste test. We tried to guess each flavor and see which one we liked best - pomegranate cherry was the favorite.



The Dragonflies loved the month of February! We drew pictures and shared about who and what we loved (Mommies and Daddies were most common). We made a Valentine's Day gift for our parents using a heartshaped frame and red macaroni. The Dragonflies made special cards for our Manatee and Sea Turtle friends at Baby Gator on Newell Drive. We took a field trip to UF's Mail and Document Services to mail the cards. While we were there, the Dragonflies got their very own passport with their picture and stamps! The children had a great time. To celebrate Valentine's Day, we had a little party where we danced and enjoyed the red velvet cupcakes we made! We shared some love by going on a Friendship Walk with the big kids in the Firefly Class! The Dragonflies enjoyed spending time with their older buddies. Also, we made some bumblebee pudding for the Bumblebee class and ourselves. It was yummy!!



The Dragonflies had a magical month of March! First, we "Marched into Literacy" with Dr. Seuss' *The Cat In A Hat*, *Green Eggs and Ham* and other books filled with rhyming words. Each child designed their own Dr. Seuss hat and bowtie to wear home. Next, we soared into a magical world of "GREEN" with Ms. Katie inviting a special friend named: Patty the Leprechaun. She left a glittery path each day after nap time to surprise the children when they got up from nap with shamrock tattoos and stickers, erasers, and chocolate kisses. Wow, how exciting it was for the children to follow the glitter trail and find the treats at the end of the rainbow. We ended our magical trip with green milk at



lunchtime, baked green cookies, (yummy), green oobleck, voted on who liked *Green Eggs and Ham*, and made a plant terrarium (by putting a green plant into a water bottle). We continued our "March into Literacy" by discussing our favorite books. Some of the Dragonfly parents came in to read their child's favorite book. It was special and the children enjoyed our guests. Finally, our month ended with us learning and singing nursery rhymes like: Humpty Dumpty; Itsy Bitsy Spider; Little Bo Peep; and One, Two, Buckle My Shoe. We completed our March into Literacy with an exciting trip to the Educational Library at Norman Hall. Keep your child learning and growing after the month of March by visiting your local Library to practice many of the activities listed above.

Jackie & Katie



Upcoming Events/Closings — Lake Alice, Newell Drive & PK Yonge

- ◆ Closed Monday May 27 for Memorial day
- ◆ Closed Monday through Wednesday June 24, 25, 26 for IN-SERVICE
- ◆ Closed Thursday July 4th for Independence Day
- ◆ Closed Monday September 2 for Labor Day

Lake Alice—Future Gators: Fireflies

Hello from the Fireflies!

As usual, the children have been very busy inside, and outside the classroom. They are working hard in center time practicing their emergent math and reading skills. They are blossoming through the Second Step Socio-Emotional Curriculum. They have learned how to control their emotions,

talk through their problems, and come up with helpful solutions!

Our year so far has been filled with a Chinese New Year Celebration, Valentine's Day Prom, and a very Lucky St. Patrick's Day Party! We took a fantastic field trip around UF's Campus looking for all the letters in the alphabet, and we found them all!

Pre-Kindergarten has been successful and we teachers know that the children will transition beautifully. Graduation was on April 19th and was just wonderful for the children and parents. We look forward to Summer Camp starting in June!



Alex & Jennifer



Lake Alice—Future Gators: Ladybugs



The Ladybugs have been very busy with wonderful cooking activities, adventures to the Physics Center, Meditation Center, and the Beef Teaching Unit. We had an "Eggstravaganza" and practiced for graduation with children from the other centers.

Academically, we have been working on compound words, addition, higher number recognition, the months of the year, days of the weeks, phonemic awareness for beginning reading skills, handwriting, sequencing of events, critical thinking and the most important, listening skill activities.



We are on the home stretch towards kindergarten. You have some very bright children who are surpassing our expectations. Their eagerness for learning is amazing.

As you know, Miss Katey left us to be with her family in a time of need but we gained a bright light, Ms. Mary, who transferred from our Newell center. Thank you for allowing us to care for and teach your remarkable children.

Cyndi & Mary



REMINDER: All Baby Gator centers will be closed Monday through Wednesday June 24, 25, 26 for IN-SERVICE

Baby Gator at P.K. Yonge



The Baby Gator PK Yonge team would like to welcome Ms. Debbie to our center. Ms. Debbie is teaching the Dreamers class with Mr. Jorge. Ms. Debbie comes to us from Baby Gator at Lake Alice and we are very excited to have her.

We have been very busy these last few months. Along with learning letters, shapes, letter sounds and writing, we had wonderful topics to work on. In January, the Explorers explored "All Things Cold", winter, winter sports and both Arctic and Antarctic animals. If a polar bear and a penguin were to meet in the wild what would happen? (They will never

meet, they live in different hemispheres). The Dreamers were busy with snowflake patterns and pretending to be hibernating bears. They made polar bears with fur by mixing glue and shaving cream!

In February the Explorers talked about love, family, relationships and hearts. All part of the "All You Need is Love" theme. There were heart projects and family sketches galore in our class. The last week in February we studied the human heart. Where it is, how big it is and what it does.

February was "All about Love" in the Dreamers class as well as Dental Health month. We made owls out of hearts for the classroom walls and bags for their Valentine's Day card exchange. They also learned the importance of keeping their teeth clean through a science experiment brushing hard boiled eggs back to their natural white color.



In March our theme was "Marching into Literacy. We just finished up a silly, wacky, week in honor of Dr. Seuss. We had lots of fun with rhyming, wacky socks and hat Friday. The wonderful books of Eric Carle and Leo Lionni were also explored. Come April we welcome Spring and start planting flowers and studying how things grow.

Bivy, Debra, Drew & George

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." - Dr. Seuss

Newell Drive—Tiny Gators: Hummingbirds, Sandpipers and Flamingos



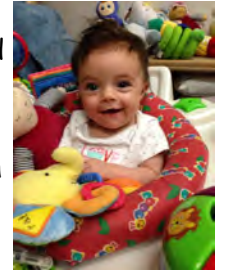
In the **Hummingbird** classroom, there have been many changes. Several infants left this nest and transitioned to different classrooms as they grew and began to crawl and walk! Then, the

Hummingbirds welcomed many new friends! We have been busy creating many art projects with hands and



The **Sandpipers** have been doing some exciting activities in the Sandpiper classroom. One of our themes has been "Marching Through Literacy." We read "Where the Wild Things Are" and made Max puppets out of toilet paper rolls, as well as painted a wild thing mural.

Our class, also read "Rainbow Fish" and created our own rainbow fish with tissue paper fins. We even read and marched to "We're Going on a Bear Hunt." The children loved finding the paper bears hidden throughout the room.



The toddlers are so big now that they are all actually toddling, taking one nap, and playing on the "big kid" playground.



footprints, as well as finger painting (well...hands, at this age). We have also enjoyed Music time with Anne, being a very captive audience; PHIT Kids fun with Nika;

American Sign Language and special times with Keri. The Hummingbird infants brighten up the Tiny Gator suite with the smiles on their faces and the happiness they show by flapping their little arms and legs!

Rachel & Rene



Flamingos have been experiencing several transitions throughout the past few months. Nice work to all the teachers and parents who have supported our children to



make this a successful experience. Our classroom has been working on mobility, language development and social skills. We have been engaging in sensory play with finger painting, water, ice cubes and stampers. We have established a schedule for a circle time between 12:30-1:00. During that time the children are being exposed to early literacy activities of singing and reading. We are also trying to go for daily stroller walks between 2:00-3:00. These times frames may vary depended on the children's' own daily routines. Our favorite activities are playing with shakers and scarves to music and reading Crazy Animals Tap the Nose which is a fun interactive book.

Patti & Tammy



Julie & Latanya

NEWELL DRIVE-LG1: Sea Turtles A

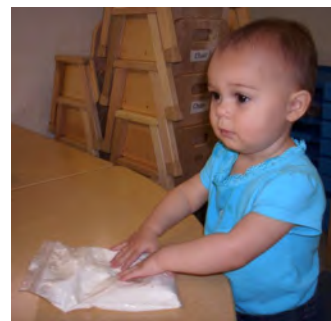
Sea Turtles A have had great three months. We have gotten six new friends since January. We have learned about ice, emotions, and literacy. We have also started working on using the Rainbow Rope, forks, and cups without lids.



In January we learned about all things ice. We had fun exploring how ice feels and melts. In February we learned about emotions. We learned about being happy, sad, angry, and scared. In March we learned about literacy. We learned to ABC song. We also started to count objects.

We are looking forward to the next few months of learning and having fun. We will continue practicing the Rainbow Rope, using forks, and cups without lids.

Jamie



"To climb steep hills requires slow pace at first." - William Shakespeare

NEWELL DRIVE-LG1: Sea Turtles B



The Sea Turtles B have had a fun start of the New Year! We celebrated in having most of the children (soon to be all!) turn two! This was a very exciting time, and the children loved wearing the class birthday "crown" for their special days. The Sea Turtles B have been very successful in practicing their shapes, sizes, numbers, letters, and colors. They also have been working on their potty training and are doing great. They are talking so much now, and make us laugh all the time with the things they say!

In January, the children explored the season of winter with our "Ice, Ice, Baby Theme".

They matched pictures of winter animals and cold weather apparel. We played a game of "hockey" with homemade hockey sticks. One of the children's favorite activities to do has been playing with the threading toys and lacing hole-punched pictures.

In February, the Sea Turtles B learned about friendship, sharing, emotions, and the 5 senses. We went on a friendship walk with our friends in the Manatees class and had a wonderful time. The children used measuring cups to scoop and

pour a delicious Valentine's snack mix bag.

For Valentine's Day, the children made cards for each of their classmates and put them in each other's goody bags.

March's theme was "All About Literacy". We celebrated authors that we love, like Eric Carle and Jane Yolen, by doing art projects and activities that pertained to their books!

For Yolen's "How Do Dinosaurs Learn Their Colors?", the children played what we called "wall twister", in which they had to find and place their hands on the colors and shapes that we called out to them. It was so much fun! For Eric Carle week, the children made their own "Very Hungry Caterpillars" and took a trip to the computer room to listen and identify the sounds of the animals in "Polar Bear, Polar Bear" and others. The Sea Turtles B are looking forward to summertime and water days!

Jessica and Tracie



Making letters with our bodies



"Wall Twister"



Friendship walk with Manatees class

NEWELL DRIVE—LG1: Rainbow Fish

The rainbow fish classroom has been very busy working on independence. The children are dumping their own food, putting away their nap sheets/bags, brushing their teeth, and pulling down their own pants/skirts to use the potty. The children love to do things on their own and, with the help of their teachers, they are gaining confidence and independence.



As the children get older, they go from solitary play to interacting more and more with their peers. The children in the Rainbow Fish classroom love to interact with one another especially when they are engaged in dramatic play. The children love to dress up and play house keeping. Puppy bikes and wagons have also become a

big favorite with the children. They love to push each other around in the wagons. Every morning, Ms. Ari gives the children the option of going to the playground, sand box or the area with the puppy bikes and wagons. Almost every morning, they yell PUPPY BIKESSSSSSSSSS in excitement.

During the month of February we learned about love, friendship and caring for one another. We made tree hearts, shared toys, and made Valentine snacks for our friends. As part of a friendship lesson, the Rainbow Fish, Manatees and Tigers went on a friendship walk. The children had a blast walking with their buddies and exploring the reggae room. The older children did a wonderful job taking care of their younger friends.

As the summer approaches the Rainbow Fish classroom is extremely excited about starting water day. We look forward to a wonderful summer this year.

Ari



REMINDER: All Baby Gator centers will be closed
Monday through Wednesday June 24, 25, 26 for IN-SERVICE

NEWELL DRIVE - LG2: Beavers



The Beaver's have had a very exciting year. During the winter season the children learned about all things cold. In January, the class saved an ice cube, learned about solids and liquids, dissolved different substances in water and learned interesting facts about arctic animals. In February, the children traced shadows and gave love at Valentine's Day. The class ended the month with Dr. Seuss's Birthday, making Green Eggs and Ham and having a fun pajama day!!! In March, the children explored the world of literacy with great authors like Mo Willems, Eric Carle, and Audrey Wood. We had a wonderful visit to the library in the month of April.



Angela & Caitlin



A Recipe from the Baby Gator International Cookbook

Smoothy For All Ages—Sherry McMullens & family

1 cup yogurt (your favorite flavor)

2 cups apple, berry or grape juice

3 tablespoons honey

1 cup fresh (not frozen) strawberries

1 ripe banana

1 to 2 cups ice (only if you want it cold)

Put all ingredients into a blender. Chop and blend until smooth.

Serves 3-4 people. Great for a quick breakfast and fun for kids to help with preparing!

Love Cookbooks?

Purchase a copy of the Baby Gator International Cookbook for interesting international recipes provided by Baby Gator parents, teachers and staff. The cookbooks are \$10 each and are available in the main office. They make great gifts, too!



NEWELL DRIVE - LG2: Manatees

Happy Spring from the Manatee class!

We had a wonderful winter this year with lots of fun activities and trips. Besides our normal icy activities for January, our kids decided they were really into pirates, so we turned our classroom into a pirate ship and went on a



treasure hunt through campus, leading to buried treasure at Century Tower.



February is always a fun month for us, as we celebrate love and friendship in our already affectionate class. We took our annual trip to the Baughman Center, where we played love songs and danced.



March is perhaps our favorite month, as we are a class that loves to read! "Marching into Literacy" was packed with lessons about authors ("they write the words!") and



illustrators ("they draw the pictures!"), as well as different types of stories like fairy tales and nursery rhymes. We took a trip to the Alachua County Library where we celebrated Dr. Seuss's birthday with stories, songs and activities. Ms. Nina and Ms. Angie dressed up as Thing One and Thing Two, and all our friends were cats.



Here's a few of the Manatees take on Humpty Dumpty:
Humpty Dumpty Sat On The Wall...



Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. Poor Humpty Dumpty. - Aiden

Great fall. Fall down. And then the horses came. Then the horsey bite him. Then the horsey said I'm sorry. - Emma

A great fall. The King's horses. - Oscar

Fall Down. Get a big boo boo. A big break. Mr. Humpty Dumpty. - Sebastian

Got a big bump. All the horses and the prince come to fix him. - Ellie

We look forward to another stupendous Spring!

Ms. Angie, Ms. Nina and the Manatees



NEWELL DRIVE - LG2: Otters

The otter classroom has been filled with busy happy chatter. January started with a "Why is it still winter?" (the holidays are over) count-down to Spring! With this countdown come a lot of new knowledge about seasons and the calendar. Most of the activities have been with a huge literary base, starting with an in depth study of THE MITTEN by Jan Brett. Learning about fact and fiction, hibernation, responsibility and cooperation were some of the topics covered in this book. The children enjoyed this method of using a book theme a lot so we continued it for February and March! The Otters advanced their color mixing skills through the book MOUSE PAINT, increased shape, color, problem solving and following instructions skills with MOUSE SHAPES. Both books are by Ellen Stoll Walsh.

One of the Otters' favorite activities is to make sun catchers, a simple activity, but unique and different each time they do it. Another was creating the alphabet by using Denise Fleming's book ALPHABET UNDER CONSTRUCTION. Each letter had to be made by doing different activities - the E got erased, the N had nails put in it; the R got rolled out...



the whole week to complete and was displayed proudly on the wall of the classroom.

Other authors that were a focus this quarter were: Leo Lionni, Eric Carle, Lois Elbert, Jonathon London and Tedd Arnold. All of these authors are highly recommended for continued reading at home. March was literacy month and the children kept logs of their reading time. Over 1200 minutes were turned in and an ice cream party was earned! WAY TO GO OTTER FAMILIES!

All of the Otters are doing very well in writing their names and have become great public speakers through morning share time. With some of the Otter friends moving away the children have become more aware of the US map and the postal system. They created and sent letters and cards to friends in other parts of the country.

All of this excitement from letters, words, sounds and rhymes! How better to help foster the love of books and reading. We took a field trip to the Downtown Library shared by the Future Gators and Tigers classes. The storyteller had everyone's attention, entertaining them with a story about a frog who forgets his underwear. The amusement continued with a video by Mo Williams titled NAKED MOLE RAT GETS DRESSED- only giggles could be heard every time the children heard the word naked. The fun continued with a behind the scenes tour of the library including the book mobile.

BUT, the field trip to the Florida Museum of Natural History was the best! The Otters put on their thinking caps to discover new things along with finding all the items in the scavenger hunt. Each child also received two new books for their home collection. The Discovery Zone at the Museum is always filled with great adventures and explorations.

These trips would not be as enjoyable or successful without all of the great parents and chaperones that help us with supplies, donations and time. We appreciate all of you!

Lee & Rayne



NEWELL DRIVE - Growing Gator: Lions

The winter season was an adventurous and creative time for the Lion classroom! We were fascinated by the changing leaves and plants around the playground, which made for many learning opportunities about growth and the seasons. During the month of January we explored all things cold. We acted like Antarctic animals living on the ice, we learned about which animals hibernate during the cold winter months, and we played with ice as often as possible! Wow, we sure do love to paint with ice; it was probably our favorite activity to do all month (and we did it again and again)!



Wow, we sure do love to paint with ice; it was probably our favorite activity to do all month (and we did it again and again)!

In February we spent most of our time learning about Valentine's day, exploring heart shapes, appreciating the diversity in our classroom, and discovering all of the "things with wings." We used our creative minds to make all kinds of projects with hearts. We made heart patterns, heart animals, heart cards, and so



We used our creative minds to make all kinds of projects with hearts. We made heart patterns, heart animals, heart cards, and so



much more! It was really fun. The Natural History Museum, along with the Alachua County Library and the Early Learning Coalition, were gracious to include us in their annual "Things with Wings" event. Although we weren't able to attend the original event due to a tornado warning on the morning of the field trip, the Natural History Museum worked tirelessly to re-schedule and plan for us to go visit on another day. With some hard work, and a lot of luck, we were able to take a field trip to explore "Things



with Wings" in April. We are so thankful that the museum helped make this possible, we had SO much fun!

A wonderful chef from the Shands Hospital helped us celebrate Valentine's Day by bringing cupcakes for all of us to decorate with our friends and family. We had a big decorating party in the Tiger classroom and thoroughly enjoyed eating our masterpieces once they were finished. Yum!



The month of March was all about "Marching through Literacy." Everything we did was about books; we love books SO much! We read Eric Carle

books, we read books in Spanish and English, and we read all of our favorite books, too. We even took a trip to the library to enjoy a special multicultural story time!



In the month of April and we are learning about how things grow - everything from plants and trees to air and insects. We have already enjoyed a whole week about sunflowers, and now we know how a plant grows from a tiny seed to a tall, tall sunflower plant!

Happy Spring,

Ms. Braden



NEWELL DRIVE - Growing Gators: Bears



In January the Bears learned about animals that hibernate and about the changes that occur during the winter seasons. We had fun exploring ice as well as painting with ice, and dressing up in dramatic play with winter clothes. With our imaginations we were able to transport ourselves to the Antarctica. It was really cold!



March is one of Mrs. Sonia's favorite months - the month of literacy. We were able to take a field trip on the RTS to the Headquarters Library

and listen to a bilingual storyteller; her name was also Mrs. Sonia. The best part was that we all were able to check out books



In February had activities and lessons on how to be a good friend, how to use our manners to ask for a toy, ask for forgiveness and share our things. During



the month we also learned that being different is being beautiful. We studied The Beauty of Diversity.

To finalize this month we had a Cupcake Day sponsored by Chef Eric who make cupcakes for us. We got to invite our parents to help us decorate our cupcakes.



for our class. We also got to study and imitate Eric Carle's Artistic Style. We got to explore with paint, feathers, Legos, all different types of paintbrushes, toothbrushes, sponges, and more just as Eric Carle.



Happy Spring!
Ms. Sonia



Cupcake Day with Chef Eric



NEWELL DRIVE - Growing Gators: Tigers

January's theme was "All About Winter". During this month we explored all things cold, the season of winter, different kinds of weather events and animals that hibernate in the winter. Some of the vocabulary words we learned in January were 'frost', 'sleet', 'icicles' and 'hibernate'. We conducted awesome science experiments like making frost, figuring out how to make ice melt and the difference between hot and cold temperatures.



The theme for February was "All you need is love". We did lots of activities on friendship and being kind to one another in and out of the classroom. On February, 13th we had a cupcake party! Our chef from Shands hospital brought in cupcakes and decorations. We let the children's imagination run wild and had them decorate the cupcakes however they chose. We had so much fun decorating the cupcakes and eating them with our families and friends!



During the month of February, we also did a whole week about helping in our community. We walked to the police station and gave them thank you cards we had created for them earlier in the day. We took the Manatee and Rainbow fish class for a nature walk. We also baked cookies for our friends in the pediatric ward at Shands.



In March the theme was "Marching in to Literacy". We had a blast jumping into literacy by reading all of our favorite books. We had a week on *Where the Wild Things Are*, *Little Red Hen*, and *The Gingerbread Man*. For the last week in March the children brought in their favorite books to read. During this month we explored a variety of books and re-enacted them in our dramatic play center. Along with doing a plethora of activities on reading and different types of books we went on a field trip to the Alachua County Library with the Otters class. We got a behind-the-scenes tour of the Library and went for story hour. We had so much fun!



Cheryl & Nika

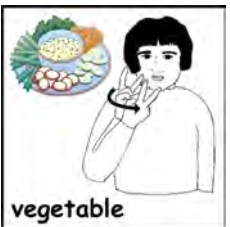
American Sign Language

by Keri Stacey



2013 has already proven to be a wonderful year, and we are all having oh, so much fun in the Baby Gator Sign Language Program! In January we read the book, "Polar Bear, Polar Bear What do You Hear?" by Eric Carle and we played a fun game where the children got to hear animal sounds and were challenged to see if they could identify the different animals that they heard. Some of the animal sounds were tricky, like that peacock, what a silly sounding bird, but boy was it fun! Some of the animal signs they learned were **ELEPHANT**, **HORSE**, **CAT** and **BIRD**.

In February the sign language focus was on feelings and emotions. In Tiny Gators, LG1 and LG2 we explored pictures of cute babies making **HAPPY**, **SAD**, and **GRUMPY** faces. The children loved this book and still ask to see the **BABY** book even though we are already well into April. The Growing Gators and Future Gators children got to learn the signs for other more descriptive emotions like **FRUSTRATED**, **SILLY** and **EXCITED**. We were also able to read a lot of fun books about how we feel and how to make sure that we always remember to treat one another with love and respect even on our grumpiest days.



In March I was able to team up with the PHITKids program and borrowed some fun materials about healthy eating. In class I taught the teachers and children the signs for **FRUIT** and **VEGETABLE** and taught them about how even if they can't remember all of the signs for every fruit and vegetable they can just make the sign for which food group it is in. If you can't remember the sign for banana, you can simply sign **FRUIT**. If you can't remember the sign for potato, you can simply sign **VEGETABLE**.

(Parents; this is a technique that is referred to as "Conceptual Grouping" and is a well-used practice when using ASL with young children.) The older classes did get to learn some other fun signs like **APPLE**, **PINEAPPLE**, **CARROT** and **CORN** to name a few. We also had fun sorting the fruits and vegetables on the food pyramid. The big question that caused everyone to wonder is...*what is a tomato?* Is it a fruit? Is



"Apple"



"Pineapple"

it a vegetable? One VPK student at Lake Alice described a tomato to be, "A vegetable that is dressed up like a fruit" hmmm....what do you think?

I would like to take a minute to congratulate all of the graduating VPK students. I want every child to know how very proud I am of them. I wish them well in their future endeavors and want them to know that they will always hold a special place in my heart! Congratulations Graduates!

As the year continues we are looking forward to many more fun learning opportunities. Parents, if you ever have any questions about the sign language program or if you like to receive a copy of the weekly lesson plans for your child's class, please send me an email at thekerbear@ufl.edu

Happy signing!
Keri





by Nika Lorenz



In January, we learned all about keeping our bodies safe from germs. The children were introduced to Bug, a puppet who doesn't know how to cover his sneeze or cough. The children loved teaching bug the proper way to sneeze and cough. Along with teaching Bug, the kids learned how to wash their hands correctly with a fun song called "Washing hands" sung to the tune of Fere Jaque. We also did an entire lesson on hula hoop play. The kids really liked getting to explore the different movements of the hula hoops and playing relay races with them. Everyone seemed to enjoy chasing after their hula hoops across the playground.

In February we learned about keeping our heart healthy. We went on nature walks and played silly games. We also did a lesson on our heart and how to keep it healthy. The children were exposed to a model heart and were taught how the heart is the most important muscle in our body. We read books and discussed different activities we could do to keep our heart strong. During our nature walks we would stop and check our heart rate. Now every time the

kids see me they tell me about how their heart is beating and ask me if I would like to feel. For the Tiny Gators, the children explored an obstacle course.

For the month of March we focused on water safety, the importance of drinking water, bowling and hockey. The kids had fun learning about water and why we should drink it. They really loved playing with the water



shakers and sorting the different drinks (healthy vs. non healthy). The children absolutely loved bowling, especially the 2 year olds because the lesson allowed them to knock the pins over. For the older children we practiced turn taking and helping our friends. The children would bowl as a team and would help each other pick up the pins after their turn was over. The last week in March we learned about hockey. The children each got a cardboard hockey stick and a ball to try and hit around. It was really fun to see them running around playing hockey on the blacktop. For tiny gators I brought in ice and balls for them to play with. They loved the sensory

experience.

Field Day was a great success! We had over 300 people attend! Even though it was cold we had so much fun with our families and friends! I look forward to our Fall Field day!

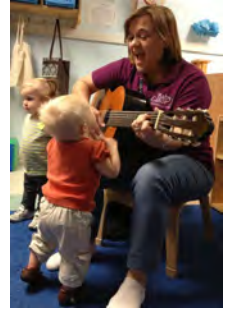
Nika



Music Program



by Anne Roberts



"Sing, sing a song. Sing out loud, sing out strong!" Our music classes this winter and spring have been full of singing, stories, rhythm, movement and fun. The Tiny Gators enjoy listening and moving along as they listen to Ms. Anne's guitar. There is a lot of bouncing, wiggling, head shaking, and arm flapping that happens when they hear "I've Got a Song in My Tummy" or "Hello, Everybody and How Are You?". They are such a fun and responsive audience that music time together goes much too quickly!



I'd like to give families of children in LG-1 through VPK a quick overview of a typical music lesson. Class begins with a welcome song where we'll sing each child's name or the name of their class. Next we will do a movement song to get focused and ready to listen such as one of our favorites; "I'm Growing Up". Most lessons will feature a book that is based on a song or that can be turned into a song. Rhythm and rhyme are wonderful precursors to reading as well as being the basis for all songs. I have discovered a wealth of great children's literature since I started this program 2 years ago and my discoveries keep on growing!

LG-1 - The children in LG-1 are learning about rhythm as they play shakers and jingle bells as they sing. If any families are not familiar with "The Chicken Song" - just ask your toddler to teach it to you! After a story and some songs, the children often enjoy moving around the classroom while singing, playing instruments or listening to live-music on a CD. A favorite book series has been *Pete the Cat* by Eric Litwin.



LG-2 - Our children always love learning about animals so animals that make music are



even better! LG-2 often enjoys using props such as puppets to help them to re-enact a story or song such as *Old MacDonald Had a Farm* by Holly Berry in which the animals form a country jug band. *Farmer Joe and the Music Show* by Tony Mitton was also a lot of fun when read/sung to the tune of Turkey in the Straw. After the story the class enjoyed forming their own rhythm band with shakers, tambourines, wood blocks, and jingle bells.

Grasshoppers and Growing Gators - These groups enjoy movement activities and circle games such as "Jim Along Josie" where they move according to the directions in the song and "Shoo Fly, Don't Bother Me". Songs and books that encourage participation and feature a call-and-response format are also fun learning tools. Some of the favorites were *I Got Two Dogs* by John Lithgow in which he sings the story, and *Be Quiet, Mike!* by Leslie Petricelli about a monkey who loves to play the drums.

VPK - Our oldest group enjoys learning about musical instruments and different styles of music. *Zin, Zin, Zin - A Violin* by Lloyd Moss taught them about the instruments of the orchestra, while *Ben's Trumpet* by Rachel Isadora taught about jazz. Classic songs turned into books also fostered learning about rhythm and rhyme as the class had lessons featured *The Little Red Hen* sung by Elizabeth MacMahon and *The Corner Grocery Store* by Raffi. The VPK classes prepared for their graduation ceremony on April 19th and put on a fantastic performance!

Please feel free to ask me about the songs your children sing at home or in the car. I would love to give you information about the singers and songs your child enjoys listening to or the books they love to read. Music is a wonderful and fun way to learn and build a multitude of skills so - keep on singing!

Ms. Anne



Dear Parents,

It is time for Spring Graduation and the end of the 2013 school year. Please remember we require at least a **two week notice of withdrawal**. A withdrawal notice form is available at the office of each center. Please note, that if you are graduating, no longer employed, or are a part-time student, staff or faculty with the University of

Florida, then your child (ren) are no longer eligible for enrollment at Baby Gator. Please see the withdrawal policy below.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Parents are required to complete a WITHDRAWAL NOTICE FORM and return it to the office at least 2 weeks prior to the child's last day.

Children of faculty, staff or post-docs must withdraw from Baby Gator no later than their parent's last day of employment at UF.

Children who are entering kindergarten may remain at Baby Gator until the first day of kindergarten.

Parents are requested to provide contact information for the Baby Gator Alumni Group's records.

If you know your child will be leaving Baby Gator or have questions regarding your status with UF, please notify me at jonimarierm@ufl.edu as soon as possible. Advance notice of openings helps us enroll a new child as soon as a child departs, keeping our enrollment steady.

Thank you for your assistance.

Joni



Baby Gator Lake Alice had a very fun and successful flapjack, family fun fund-raiser in April to benefit the classrooms.

Thanks to all who participated.

There were so many requests to do this again so we will plan to hold another pancake breakfast in the fall.



Tigers Class being silly on campus!



Field Day—March 2013

Field Day on March 2nd was a fantastic family event. Participants received goodie bags and medals. Parents and children participated in a variety of activities including football toss, hula hoop contest, goal kick, 40 yard dash, face painting, an obstacle course, sack races, and bean races. Along with great activities, we served cheese pizza, fruit and lots of water for everyone to enjoy.



Graduation—April 2013



"You were all amazing: putting on a ceremony where not a single child cried, but every single parent did!"
-Elliott's Parents





**Baby Gator Child Development
and Research Center
at the University of Florida**

Pamela J. Pallas, Ph.D., Director

Lake Alice center:
793 Corry Circle
Gainesville, FL 32611
Phone: 352-392-2330
Fax: 352-846-0503

Newell Drive center:
1244 Newell Drive
P.O. Box 10018
Gainesville, FL 32610
Phone: 352-273-8000
Fax: 352-273-8747

P.K. Yonge center:
1080 SW 11th Street
Gainesville, FL 32601
Phone: 352-392-3042
Fax: 352-392-3043

E-mail: carolflowers@ufl.edu



Sports Night

We had our first Baby Gator Sports Night. The kids had so much fun! The UF girls soccer team set up some great obstacles for the children to participate in. Everyone enjoyed themselves and had a blast. Becky Burleigh and I look forward to this becoming an annual event! I hope to see you at our next PHIT kids event!

Nika

