



Baby Gator Tales

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

The holidays are upon us and Baby Gator has many reasons to give thanks. The Diamond Village center opened in September, providing wonderful space for learning and growing for two-and-a-half to five year olds. The process was long and painful sometimes but the end result is a safe and secure center with a welcoming feel. The renovations at Newell Drive began as soon as the children moved out of the classrooms. December 1, the Newell toddlers will move into fresh new rooms with better designed space for children and their teachers. The second phase of the project, classrooms for 26 infants, will begin soon after with a planned opening date of early January. With the completion of the renovations Baby Gator will be serving 370 children.

Playground renovations are still in process. Thanks to the success of our last two "Building the Love" fundraisers we have renovated infant playgrounds at Newell and Lake Alice and a toddler playground at Lake Alice. Next on the work list is the preschool playground at Lake Alice, followed by the preschool playgrounds at

Newell and Diamond Village. Please watch for your e-vite to Building the Love 2015! This year's event will again be an evening of good food and good wine with good people who so generously support Baby Gator. Please plan to join us!

Be sure to share the holiday spirit with your children and their classmates at the Holiday programs this year. Miss Anne has some delightful things planned.

Wishing you happy holidays and good health and great joy in 2015.



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

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Inside this issue:

Lake Alice	2
PK Yonge	13
Newell Drive	15
Playground	25
Ribbon Cutting Ceremony	
Music Program	26
PHIT Kids	27
Upcoming Events	28

Lesson Plan Themes

September

"All About Me & Get Up Go"



October

"Down On The Farm"



November

"We Are Thankful"



Lake Alice –Tiny Gators

The month of October in Tiny Gators was Fa-BOO-lous! Our babies enjoyed exploring the fruits and veggies of the fall such as: pumpkins, gourds, corn and apples. We went beyond the horizons by encouraging our babies to paint the different shades of Mother Nature's beauty!

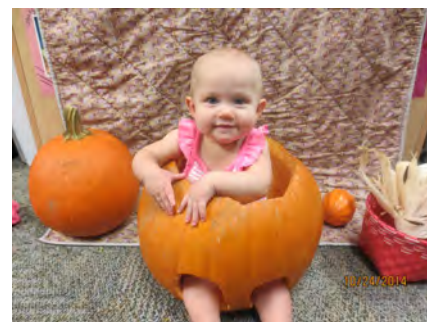


We partook in a pumpkin photo shoot inspired by our team teachers Ms. Cathy and Ms. Jamie! It all started with a simple request made by Ms. Cathy..."Tiny Gators need to do this PLEASE!!!" and a picture from Ms. Jamie! Our response...? "Ask and you shall receive."

The pressure was on for the teachers in Tiny Gators this month, being the two-time reigning champs of the Halloween Costume contest...we had to go big or go home! Our theme for this year was Sesame Street and we wanted to bring to life the characters of everyone's childhood favorites: Elmo, Big Bird, Cookie Monster and Oscar the Grouch. We reigned victorious, even against some stiff competition, such as: Little Red Riding Hood, Ninja Turtles, Nerds and Fairies!

However, our babies were the real champs because they brought cuteness to

Halloween dressed as:
lions, tigers, penguins,
pumpkins, ladybugs, firefighters and a farmer!



Our annual Fall festival had a live Irish performance from the McGrail clan! Dad Kieran was

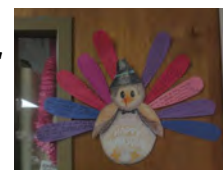
the lead vocalist strumming his guitar, while his son Griffin, along with his pals, beat on the drum that was provided and rocked to the rhythm of the beats! Parents and their babies were able to snapshot complementary photos from our very own "festive photo booth." All in all, it was a great time for our parents and babies to mingle in a warm, welcoming social setting.



If you look at either Daisies' or Sweetpeas' door you will notice our "Thankful Turkeys," where our parents have the opportunity to express what they are thankful for in the month of November.



All in all, Tiny Gators had a successful Fall and are looking forward to a "wonderful" Winter!



Lake Alice—Little Gators 1: Tiger Lilies

The Tiger Lilies have been very busy growing and exploring the past several months. Some of us have said our first words and taken our first steps. A few of us are even walking around all by ourselves! We are all drinking out of sippy cups and in the next few weeks most of us will be sleeping on cots just like "The Big Kids". So many milestones have been accomplished in such a short period of time!!!

We spent the first few weeks in Tiger Lilies getting used to our new classroom, our new teachers and friends, and our new daily schedule.

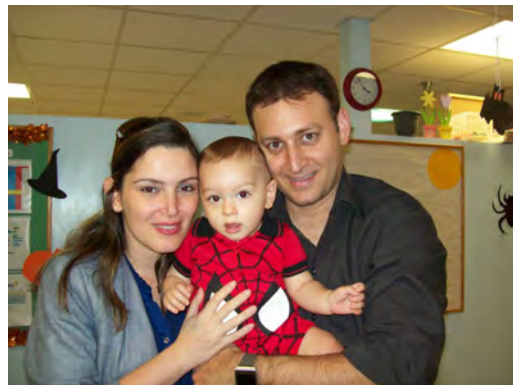
In September our theme was "Get Up and Go - Celebrating Health and Safety". We learned about Fire Safety, our five senses, what plants need to grow and healthy foods to eat. We painted a fire truck, made music shakers, found surprises in jello and tasted things that were salty, bitter, sour and sweet. We also tasted many fruits and vegetables and painted with them.

October's themes centered around the farm - animals on the farm, food grown on the farm, creepy crawlies on the farm and finally Halloween and Harvest Celebrations. We fingerpainted leaves and a barn and made sheep, cows, ducks, cats, spiders, owls and bats. The month ended with our Parent/Child Halloween Party. Everyone looked awesome in their costumes.

November's theme was "We Give Thanks". We made cornucopias, Native American corn, pumpkin pie slices, footprint carrots and handprint Mayflower ships and turkeys. The highlight of the month was our Parent/Child Thanksgiving Feast.

Some of our upcoming themes are: "Celebrations Around the World" and "Into the Galaxy" and of course we are looking forward to more accomplishments in the next couple of months!!!

Happy Holidays!
The Tiger Lilies



Lake Alice—Little Gators 1: Orange Blossoms & Sunflowers

Hello all, boy how time flies when you're having fun! Since our last newsletter we have lost friends and gained new friends. We would love to welcome all our new friends and parents to the Sunflowers and Orange Blossoms class. So let's see where to begin... in September our theme was: "Celebrating Health and Safety." We had a blast with learning all about red light, yellow light and green light, our awesome body parts, washing our hands/ and hair, and eating healthy.



We all helped make dip and tried cucumbers, carrots and tomatoes! It was great.!



As for October: "Down On The Farm/ Halloween." This month is one of our most favorite themes! There's so much to talk about with farm animals, animal food, transportation, and of course Halloween! We would love to give a huge thanks to all our amazing parents that helped with our supply list to help make it so wonderful for the children. We also want to thank all our parents for coming to our Fall Festival; it was great!



Last but not least November: "Giving Thanks." We made cards for people that help us, such as teachers, parents, Administration and Miss Belinda (who feeds us yummy food everyday!). Soon, we will be talking about giving thanks, harvest foods, Thanksgiving food, and for the season of Fall! We do hope to see all our parents at our annual Thanksgiving feast, the company is always great and food is wonderful. Hope everyone has a great holiday! Sincerely Sunflowers and Orange Blossoms.



"I'm talking about a belief that children's skill development is only one aspect of learning, and not the most important one at that. I believe helping children find out who they are and what they have to contribute to the world is the most crucial work we educators can do."

-Nancy Rosenow, Author

Lake Alice—Little Gators 2: Buttercups

Over the last several months, the Buttercups have been extremely busy!

As you've heard and have seen through many pictures and documentation, your child has taken part in many fun and educational activities. For example, during health and nutrition, your child practiced hand washing; and in harvest, we focused on planting seeds and gardening.



We also explored various activities such as nature walks and the sensory table with dirt and worms. Holidays and birthdays are also times in which we incorporate many fun activities as well. As a class, we were able to dissect and carve pumpkins, and even take part in many cooking activities!



Most importantly, potty training has been a huge deal within our classroom. We have been working really hard on making sure your little ones are on their way with using the potty; and we could not be any more proud of the improvements that have already shown! We know this will be a huge accomplishment and we can't wait to help them achieve it.



Thank you for trusting us with your little one; we definitely love working with them. It's been a great start to this year and we cannot wait to see what else is in store for us. We look forward to many more great months with both you and your child!



Lake Alice—Little Gators 2: Marigolds

Greetings Everyone!

The Marigolds kicked off the month of September with the theme, "Get Up and Go: Celebrating Health and Safety". We learned how to keep clean by not spreading germs. We learned about foods that are good for our bodies and that help us to grow. The Marigolds also enjoyed doing exercises that began with each letter of the alphabet. We ended September learning about people who keep us safe like policemen, firefighters, doctors and, of course, teachers.

The month of October was an exciting time for the Marigolds! We dedicated this month to Fall fun and farm related activities. We learned about various farm animals, foods that are grown on a farm, and different types of farm work. We went on walks around Baby Gator to explore nature and collect Fall items such as leaves, acorns, and pinecones. We also had our Fall Festival during the month of October where the children were able to get their faces painted, play with shaving cream covered pumpkins, and milk "cows"! The following week, the Marigolds were able to dress up in some really cute costumes for our Halloween Parade.

During the month of November, the Marigolds learned about manners, giving thanks, Native Americans, and Pilgrims. Some of our favorite books for this month included "Say Please!" and "How Do Dinosaurs Play with Their Friends?" We also partook in our very first field trip and bus ride to the Florida Natural History Museum to visit the Native American Exhibit--oh did we have a blast! Another highlight of the month was our Thanksgiving Feast that we were able to enjoy with some of our Marigolds families.

We could not have achieved any of this without the constant support and involvement of the parents, as well as their contributions to our class activities and materials. Thank you so much for all of your help!



Lake Alice—Growing Gators: Grasshoppers

Hello, welcome to the G-Hops corner.



We had an exciting time learning and exploring lessons and activities in expressing ourselves through art, health and safety, down on the farm, and giving thanks. We would like to give a great big shout out to our wonderful families who joined us to make our Fall Festival and Thanksgiving feast a blast. We appreciate each and every one of you.

Thanks,
Grasshoppers

Lake Alice—Growing Gators: Bumblebees

Buzzing News from the Bumblebees!

September was back to school month for many children and our theme was "Health & Safety". We learned about and explored keeping our awesome bodies healthy and happy by doing activities that involved safety practices including: dialing 911, taking a trip to "Healthy Land", where we made homemade veggie soup, pizza and fruit sundaes, as well as caring for our dental health and keeping our mind and body peaceful through yoga.



October was a very busy and exciting month! We talked about animals, barns, tractors, and Fall foods for "Down on the Farm". We also talked about Fall, the colors of leaves, and harvest time, ending with a fun and fabulous Fall Festival. We took a field trip to Publix where the Bumblebees picked their own pumpkins from the "pumpkin patch". We also had a visit from the Gainesville Fire Department where the firefighters taught us about fire safety, fire trucks, and the types of clothing that firefighters wear to protect themselves. The children had some wonderful questions for the



firefighters. Lastly, in October the Bumblebees had a great time making Halloween projects and singing Halloween songs that Miss Anne taught us. Dressed in our spooky and fun costumes, we paraded to Norman Hall where we received all sorts of sweet treats!

November brought giving thanks for the people and things in our lives. We talked about sharing and appreciating each other's company and the importance of families and sharing our Thanksgiving traditions. To help us celebrate this time of year, we created pinecone turkeys, made festive placemats and learned about Native Americans and Pilgrims. We journeyed to the Natural History Museum to get a close-up view of the American Native American Legacy and the traditions of the Native American people who lived in Florida. Finally, we celebrated with our families and friends in our classroom at our annual Thanksgiving Feast where we filled our bellies with yummy foods and homemade Bumblebee treats (recipes from the Baby Gator Cookbook!).



In December, the Bumblebees will be celebrating the winter with a "Winter Holiday Program" where we will have a sing-along featuring songs from various cultures. Please save the date, Wednesday, December 10th for this special holiday season celebration. Families have different ways of celebrating the Winter Holidays. We invite any of you or members of your family to share your holiday traditions with the class.



Our curriculum is designed to help your child with letter recognition, phonics and vocabulary development. We have combined our themes with emphasis on the alphabet and letter recognition, stories, songs, art projects, number recognition, and math/science processes. In addition to these concepts, our themes have a lot of interesting activities to enhance the week and month. We have found this to be very helpful for sparking those after-school conversations of "what did you do in school today?" as the children love to talk about things they did at school. We are looking at all of the fun themes as it allows us to work together on something special.

Lake Alice—Growing Gators: Dragonflies

Dragonfly Fall Newsletter:

The Dragonflies have fallen in love with Fall. We enjoyed taking field trips with the Bumblebees to Publix to pick pumpkins and Norman Hall to trick-or-treat! We had a great time at the Fall Festival getting our face painted, competing in the doughnut contest, riding in the spooky rocket ship, and getting messy in the slimy sensory table. The Dragonflies are finishing off the season preparing for Thanksgiving! We are learning the importance of being thankful and giving thanks to others.



Here is what we are thankful for:

Olivia - "my clothes"

Ethan - "cookies!"

Knox - "my cousin"

Adonis - "my toys and my school"

Sam - "my teachers" ... we promise we didn't make him say that

Eliana - "Halloween!"

Henri - "Mommy, Daddy, and my toys"

Brandon - "my tiger!"

James - "the trees at school"

Renata - "Mommy"

Odelia - "Mom"

Emma - "the playground"

Yolin - "Minnie!"

Ben - "car"

Shivank - "Hulk smash!"

Jayson - "watching movies"

Thomas - "Lighting McQueen"



Lake Alice—Future Gators: Fireflies

The Firefly class has been super busy learning and making memories this Fall! Since the school year has started, the children have been immersing themselves with creative lessons that follow the VPK curriculum. They have been growing in their literacy and math knowledge and practicing their fine and gross motor skills every day.

The class had so much fun celebrating Spirit Week! Each day was themed and the children got to dress up fun and even wacky at times according to the theme. From pajamas to ties to tutus, the Fireflies definitely made a statement with how much spirit they have for the University of Florida.

The Fireflies have been going on all kinds of fun adventures this Fall as well! They have been having so much fun with celebrations, field trips, and festivals. First there was a Fall Festival in October to celebrate the wonderful season, and the children got to play at various booths. Among the booths were bottle toss, sack races, digging for bones, and face painting. The children had a blast!

Shortly after that they celebrated Halloween in style by trick or treating at the College of Education. All the Fireflies dressed up in their favorite costumes and were given lots of treats and goodies. The College was very generous to the Firefly class, and the children got to make memories there that will last them a lifetime!

In celebration of the Thanksgiving holiday, the Fireflies gave back to their community by donating to the school's canned food drive. They also celebrated with their families at the annual Thanksgiving Feast. The children had so much fun eating turkey and sweet potatoes among the many other delicious foods given out that day.

It has been such a fun and memorable season for the Firefly class! They are growing physically and mentally, and cannot wait to see what will be coming up for them in the Spring.



Lake Alice—Future Gators: Ladybugs






Ladybug Hot News...



Since our last Newsletter, we have had to say goodbye to some of our friends:

Chelsea  and Lara  and hello to some new friends,

Rojin , Grace , and Bennett .

We are working very hard getting our wonderful Ladybugs ready for Kindergarten with all the VPK Standards and especially with the Social aspects that all so necessary for next year.

We have had all a lot of great fun these past few months with making butter, shucking corn, Fall Festival, Halloween and our Thanksgiving Extravaganza.



The New Year coming and a lot of new challenges! We will be kicking it into to High Gear for the home stretch for Kindergarten. "Listening" is the top challenge that will be asking our parents to help reinforce at home for class.

We wish you a wonderful Thanksgiving and time with your family!!!

Miss Cyndi Miss Sharon

Ms. Belinda, The Love Behind The Lunch

I recently had the privilege of spending the morning in Ms. Belinda's kitchen for our annual Thanksgiving meal. I expected a hot kitchen, lots of scooping and preparing, and plenty of clean-up. What I did not expect was a lesson in life and in love.

Thanksgiving preparation started long before that early Friday morning when Kelly, Robin, and I headed in to meet Ms. Belinda. She set us about our tasks, with the sounds of Christmas music filling the kitchen. As we pulled out trays of sweet potatoes and stuffing, Ms. B didn't need a thermometer or spoon. She can tell if the food is done with her eyes. She stares at the food, as if there is a secret exchange going on between her and the side dish. She looks at us and lets us know, "No, it still needs more time."



As we began to plate, she explained about "serving with a Spirit Of Excellence." She told us that each plate should be carefully prepared and presented because it shows that time and effort went in to every dish and each person receiving it is special. Even as the hustle and bustle went on, she never skipped a beat. Not even when we realized that somebody (it may have been this writer) had forgotten to remove two bags of turkey from the freezer and had to go into emergency thawing. Not an ill-word was spoken or an eye-rolled. She just put the meat into a tray to begin steaming. I began to become nervous that the meat would not thaw and it would become a Thanksgiving disaster. But, as I'm beginning to learn, in life, what we most fear and become anxious over never happens. The turkey thawed in time and may have been some of the best and most tender meat of the day. Watching her actions and taking pointers, I know that my future food will be well-seasoned, and well-prepared. I'm not saying I'm ready to turn in my keyboard and mouse for an apron and oven mitts, but in this short time she has reminded me that in everything I do, to serve with a smile and a Spirit of Excellence.

~~Ms. Belinda has been the cook at Lake Alice for almost three years, but she is no stranger to the kitchen. Before we were blessed with her delicious dishes and sweet spirit, she was personal chef to world-renowned Bishop T.D. Jakes. She has served the likes of Maya Angelou and President George W. Bush, and every morning she arrives before the sun to start prepping and preparing meals for your children.~~

Baby Gator at P.K. Yonge- Voyagers

Back to School with the Voyagers!

We started the new school year with our "Get To Know Me" theme and created projects about ourselves, our families, our schools and our cultures. We learned about the different parts of our bodies and their functions using a real size picture of each of us!

During October, the Voyagers learned all about farm animals, crops, types of farms and insects.

We celebrated Spirit week and wore crazy outfits to school, including tutus, ties and our PJs!

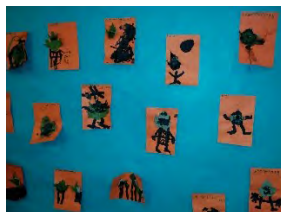
The Fire Department visited us and even let all of us get on their fire truck. The students enjoyed meeting firefighters and learning all about their jobs.

We ended October with a Spooky Harvest Festival and enjoyed hands-on-activities along with delicious spider treats.

November was all about leaves, harvests, turkeys and saying thanks. We also learned about the four seasons and celebrated the fall during our Annual Banquet Party.

Some of our favorite activities included making leaf people, collecting leaves for rubbings and paintings and creating fall trees with different materials and techniques.

During the first three months of school, the Voyagers learned about healthy, balanced meals and exercised their bodies with Ms. Nika during PHIT KIDS.



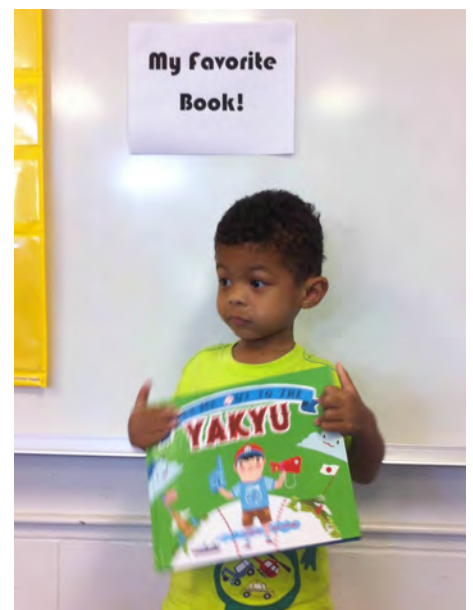
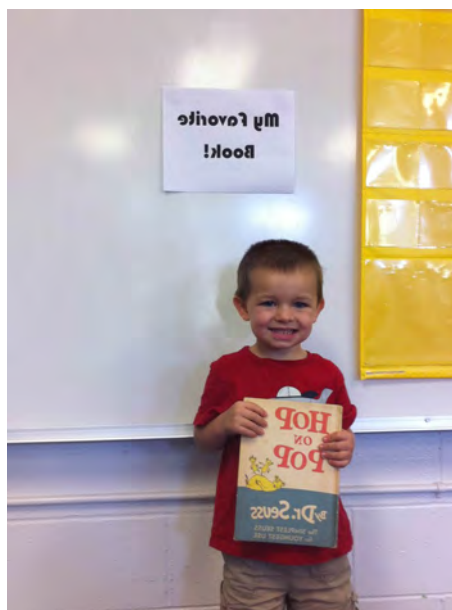
Baby Gator at P.K. Yonge- Adventurers

In August, we welcomed a whole new group of Adventurers to Baby Gator P.K. Yonge. In addition, a new teacher joined us! Ms. Liz has several years of experience with children of all ages. She is very excited to join the Adventurers classroom. We practiced sharing with our new friends, taking care of the books and toys in our classroom, and staying with our class as we go from place to place. This was a month of many new things as the new Adventurers settled into their new school.

In September, we had even more new students join us. So, we spent the month getting to know each other. All the children brought in their favorite book to share with the class. We measured and compared everyone's height and drew self-portraits. We also started learning our letters and numbers, focusing on a new letter each week and counting the days on our calendar.

In October, we learned about life on a farm. We "milked cows," planted peas and carrots, and made our own butter from cream. The children talked about the different animals that live on a farm and the different sounds that they make. Ms. Anne taught us lots of fun farm songs during music time. The children had fun watching the P.K. Yonge homecoming parade. We also had some special visitors come to school. A fire truck with several firefighters came to visit. The firefighters told us all about the special clothing they wear and then we got to go inside the truck! At the end of the month, we had a Harvest Festival with lots of fun activities.

In November, we focused on being thankful. We talked about the things we are thankful for and drew pictures of them. We also learned some words in different languages. We learned how to say "Hello" and "Thank You" in Spanish, Japanese, Chinese and Arabic. Our first field trip was this month. We went on a long walk to the Double Helix Bridge over 13th St. During our walk, we practiced staying together and saw lots of cool things. We had fun watching the cars stop at the stoplights and identifying different types of vehicles. We saw a garbage truck, a city bus and a semi-truck. Near the end of the month, our parents joined us for a special Thanksgiving meal. We decorated the classroom with turkeys and ate some delicious food.



Newell Drive—Tiny Gators: Tiggers

The Tiggers have been busy, busy developing many new skills. We can feed ourselves with a spoon, sit in circle time for a few minutes, nap on cots and can climb up the steps to slide down --- all by ourselves. Language skills are developing rapidly, we can sign two more and we can say quite a few words such as: banana, apple, water, book, up, and down.

In September we had fun learning about farm animals. We made cow pictures and a tractors by utilizing children footprint. In October we enjoyed making bat mobiles, spider puppets and happy pumpkin faces. In November learned about giving thanks to people we love. We made thank card for our parents, turkey handprints, and Native American hats.



"Good enough, never is."

-Debbi Fields, Founder of "Mrs. Fields Cookies"

Newell Drive—Tiny Gators

The Honeybees have had a great summer and fall and are excited to move to new things this winter.

They enjoyed learning about healthy living in the summer and spending water days on playing in the water table on the infant playground. As they began to grow and walk, we focused on self-concept development with activities focusing on body awareness and familial relationships by singing songs like Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes and also by creating a family tree with paint and pictures.

In October we enjoyed getting into the gator spirit during spirit week and dressing up for Halloween. We did activities learning about the farm such as milking a pretend cow and can all "moo" with the best of them. We also did a fun farm sensory bin with a barn, hay, beans and animals. We are all looking forward to learning about cultural celebrations around the world this winter and learning to express ourselves more.



"Children do not care how much you know, until they know how much you care."

-Teddy Roosevelt

NEWELL DRIVE-LG1: Little Clouds

This Fall has been flying by for the Little Clouds! We have done so many new things and met new wonderful people.

In September, we had some changes going on with our class, and this led to us gaining new friends that we cherish! This was good timing because in September we learned a lot about our class, our families, and our friends. It was especially fun to learn about some new cultures.

In October, we gained our teachers, Ms. Becca and Ms. Tina while studying all about farms. We learned about the different types of farms and all of the diverse animals that can live there. This was a fun month where our vocabulary exploded! It was also a time for several birthdays and celebrations like the Fall Festival where we got to wear our Halloween costumes!



In November as the weather changed, we began to learn about giving thanks. We were thankful for all the special people in our lives and made sure they knew it with cute, little, crafts. The Little Clouds also got to enjoy some family time during the Thanksgiving Feast.

It has been such a delightful time in this class these last few months, and we look forward to each and every day with the children!

With Love,
Ms. Becca and Ms. Tina



*"You can learn many things from children. How much patience you have, for instance."
-Franklin P. Jones*

NEWELL DRIVE-LG1: Moonbeams

This September the moon beams class learned all about farm animals. The children made tractors from the letter "T", cows from paper plates, practiced washing barn animals with soap and water, and got to explore with different foods on the farm, such as corn, wheat, and rice. We even shucked and ate real corn on the cob.

In October we had fun learning and exploring about creepy crawlies with real food. The children made bee hives with honey combs cereal, dirty worm farm using Oreos and gummy worms, and black bean ant farms. The art that they enjoyed the most for this month was making caterpillars because they got to eat painted food colored marshmallows.

This November we have been learning all about fall and giving thanks. We made thank you cards for our parents, painted with real apples, made and drank our own apple cider from apple juice and cinnamon that we drank outside for a fall picnic. We got to explore our sensory skills with credit card and golf ball painting, as well as making acorns using tissue paper.

This fall there has been a big growth in the moonbeams classroom. We have started to learn how to use the potty and have also learned an array of new vocabulary, using both Spanish and German as a focus.



NEWELL DRIVE-LG1: Shooting Stars

This September we learned about ourselves and our cultures. The children made Korean fans, practiced using chopsticks, received Henna tattoos, and celebrated Turkish New Year customs. They also enjoyed listening to different types of music and learning about traditional dances.

In October we had fun on the farm and explored creepy crawlies. The children loved practicing all of their farm animal noises and using different mediums to make their very own animals -feathers, yarn, cotton, etc. They also enjoyed going to a pretend farmers market to buy fall foods and later paint and explore the foods including pumpkins, corn, spaghetti squash, and apples. As we got closer to Halloween we learned all about creepy crawlies through fly swatter painting, spooky spider webs that magically appeared as they painted, worm lacing, worm (pasta) painting and ant body art.

The end of October also meant that it was time for spirit week! The children especially enjoyed tie/tutu day and teachers and children alike loved pajama day.

For super hero day, Ms. Angie and Ms. Nina dressed as Mario and Luigi which meant the strollers became Mario Karts and we traveled around campus trying to avoid banana peels and looking to save Princess Peach.



This November we have been learning about Harvest festivals around the world and gearing up for



Thanksgiving. The children enjoyed drum circle dancing, creating a wall of Hope, building a Sukkot hut and making their own paper lanterns. In preparation for Thanksgiving they have practiced their turkey calls, made a cornucopia, multiple kinds of turkeys and making Thank You cards.



This fall there has been an



explosion of language in the Shooting Stars class! The children have gone from signing and babbling simple sounds to saying multiple words and some are even saying sentences. These past few months we have also added new friends to the class with different home languages adding to the language mania. At any given point you will hear a child replying to you in some Chinese or Spanish that they have learned from a friend.



"Only where children gather is there any real chance of fun."
-Mignon McLaughlin, journalist and author

DIAMOND VILLAGE - LG2: Blue Jays

Greetings Baby Gator Family,

The Bluejays would like to welcome you into our little world. Below are some of our lessons and activities from the past couple of months.

September: "Getting to Know You"

September was our month of transitioning. We added a new teacher, Ms. Terika and transitioned from Polar Bears at Newell Drive and became Bluejays at Diamond Village. We gained new friends and welcomed Baby Aria as we said goodbye to Mrs. Ari as she went on maternity leave. With our newly renovated classroom we went full force with our theme for the month "Getting to Know You". We talked all about our families and learned how to recognize and sign different family members in American Sign Language. We also fished for letters of the alphabet during our pets lesson and were introduced to tracing straight lines.

October: "Down on the Farm"

October's theme "Down on the Farm" allowed us to discuss various topics such as farm animals, foods we grow on the farm, farm machines and my all-time favorite creepy crawlies on the farm. We did an interactive lesson where we milked cows, made worm beds using pudding and gummy worms and we even attended our first field trip to the Bat House. We ended the month with our Fall Festival where we invited family to join us in an afternoon of fun-filled carnival games, delicious treats and face painting. We even dressed up in cool costumes and bobbed for doughnuts.

November: "We Give Thanks"

We introduced the month of November with discussing our meal time manners. We made a please and thank you chart, which was created from the responses of our friends from the Bluejays class. We recognized our Veterans by making "thank you" cards and did a science experiment where we created 3D patriotic fireworks using food coloring, glue and salt. The month ended with our Thanksgiving feast in which we baked and decorated over twenty cupcakes. The children really enjoyed putting icing and sprinkles on the cupcakes and could not wait to share them with our friends at Diamond Village.

The Bluejays hope that you all have enjoyed our timeline of events. We look forward to updating you in the future on our growth and we are excited to have Mrs. Ari back in the New Year.

Happy Holidays to all of our Diamond Village family!



DIAMOND VILLAGE - LG2: Cardinals

Hello Baby Gator Families and Friends! It has been a very busy Fall for our little Cardinals. We have experienced so many positive changes so far. We saw the movement of our classroom from the Newell Drive center to Diamond Village towards the end of September, and we said goodbye to Ms. Keri and a great big hello to Ms. Tracie as she became our teacher alongside Ms. Taniesha. We also had our classroom name changed to the Cardinals which we have all embraced with open arms. We absolutely love our new classroom and the all the new opportunities that our beautiful new center has to offer. Below you will read about some of the exciting lessons and activities that we have been able to experience in our new home!



September

The end of the month brought not only the end of summer, but the closing of a chapter at our Newell Drive Center. We experienced the fantastic move to our new home at Diamond Village where we jumped right into our everyday learning habits. During the month we worked on the theme "Getting to Know You/All About me" through making family collage, "writing" out friendship cards which we later exchanged with our friends the Moonbeams and we made a beautiful welcoming banner for our new friends and families at our Diamond Village Center.

October

The month of October was known for our "Down on the Farm" theme where we discussed everything from what type of animals you can find on a farm to the different types of foods that are grown on a farm. We held science experiments where we attempted to "garden" our own lima beans and we made lots of different animal crafts such as our Billy Goat Gruff faces and our own version of horse trail mix. The end of the month we studied "Creepy Crawlies on the Farm" and we held our first field trip of the Fall season to the mysterious Bat House that can be found on campus across from Lake Alice. Our friends from the Blue Jays room even joined us on this fun outing! We ended the month with not only cooler weather, but a great first annual Fall Festival at Diamond Village where we dressed up in our best costumes and played and participated in various games and activities.

November

We welcomed the month of November with gratitude and appreciation as we began our theme of "Thanks" within our classroom. We discussed the concept of Fall and the different foods that we can find during this time of the year, as well as began working on our multiple "thank you" crafts for the people within our community. Our favorite was our large thank you card that we made for our school cook Ms. Lorene. We also held our annual Thanksgiving east with our families at our new playground. The Cardinals are looking forward to what the next few months and new year have to bring. Season's greetings to all of our families and friends and we wish you all have a Happy New Year in 2015.



DIAMOND VILLAGE - Growing Gator: Owls

Greetings from the Owls! Let's get this party started!



In September we welcomed new friends the best way kids know how: with a Frozen themed dance party! We continued the fun learning about health and safety: including a germ search and hygiene spin. The Owls also flew through emotions and used dramatic play and face paint to retell the Grouchy Ladybug story.



In October, the Owls showed their school spirit all week with our favorite day being Ties and Tutus day! We learned about what animals give us which products from the farm and the importance of eating lots of fruits and vegetables daily. In order to solidify the concept of milking a cow the children used gloves and a milk/water in a pan; the only being the squirting of milk on their friends on accident! We



finished off the month with a nature walk where the children crossed off items on their list by using their partner's back.



Navigating through November was a blast! Learning about the First Thanksgiving (spelling out Thanksgiving words with magnetic alphabet letters and making awesome turkey drumstick hats to accompany) as well as thanking our immediate community for all they do were some of the discussion topics. We took a trip to the police station, wrote thank you cards for our local firefighters, went on a fieldtrip to the library and made get well cards for children in

the hospital.

Lastly, we ended the month with an amazing Thanksgiving lunch with the Baby Gator families.



Thank you to all of the parents, teachers, and administrative staff that help us to have a fun learning environment where we can grow and experience the fullness of VPK joy!

DIAMOND VILLAGE - Growing Gators: Sparrows

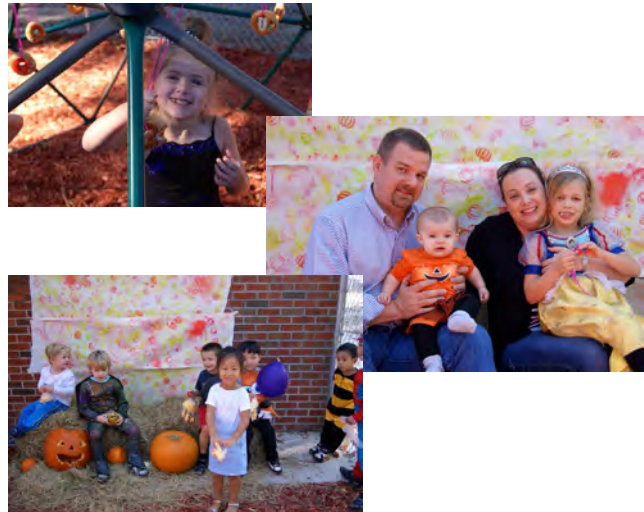
Happy Fall from the Sparrows!

The past few months were filled with many changes and exciting events! We made the amazing transformation from Caterpillars to Sparrows! It was hard to wait for our beautiful new classroom, but boy was it worth it!

In September we spent time talking and learning about our feelings, working together as a team, and getting to know ourselves and our friends a little better!



In October we had Spooktacular fun with creepy crawlies, science experiments, nocturnal animals, and Halloween festivities! Trick-Or-Treating at the Reitz was too much fun, filled with candy. We said goodbye to Ms. Alex, and hello to Ms. Quanda!



In November we enjoyed more Fall activities and an incredible Thanksgiving Feast put on by our loveable cook, Ms. Lorene.

We continue to be thankful for our incredible teachers, substitutes, and families who support, love, and guide us into becoming incredible Future Gators!

Sincerely,

The Sparrows



"Intelligence plus character, that is the true goal of education."
-Martin Luther King Jr

DIAMOND VILLAGE - Growing Gators: Robins

Wow! First, the Robins are so excited to be in our new classroom. Thank you to all who made this happen!

In September we focused on our families and "All About Me". We made so many projects that the children were so proud of. We had a visitor come in with her baby; she explained how she cares for the baby. The children asked many questions. The main thing the children said was to be gentle and give lots of hugs.

October was our start of our new unit "Fall". We took a walking trip to the forest, as the children call it. We were looking for signs of fall. The children noticed the change in the leaves, the wind, and lots of birds chirping. The children enjoyed decorating our class. Wow! Our fall festival was great. The children enjoyed going Trick-or-Treating and the Haunted House. What a great time for all. We also had the fire department come in and explain how to be safe.

November was our month to give thanks to our community, families, and friends. The children made cards for the fire fighters and we mailed them. We walked to the police station and gave them our thank you cards and took a picture with several police officers. The children thought that was so amazing. They all said thank you for protecting us. We also had a discussion about the children in the hospital. The children said that they would like to make cards for the children who are sick so that they can make them feel better. We made cards and walked to the hospital. We were able to go on the elevator to the fourth floor and give the cards to Dr. Black. We also saw a therapy dog. The children had so many questions as to why the dog was at the hospital. Thank you to all who attended our Thanksgiving Feast. Wow what a great time was had by all.

The children are learning and are eager to learn new skills. I have so many activities planned for the next few months. Please come in at any time. You are always welcome.

Thank you,
Ms. Cheryl and her Robins



"Wisdom begins with wonder."
-Socrates

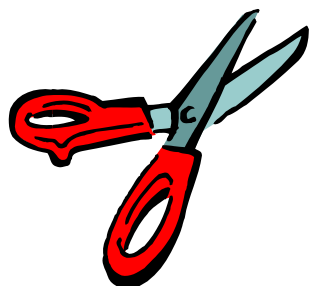
Playground Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at Diamond Village



We look forward to having this opportunity to thank all the people in Housing and the many construction companies who worked diligently with us to create a warm and welcoming new center.

**WHEN: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3RD;
6:00PM**

**WHERE: BABY GATOR AT DIAMOND
VILLAGE**



Music Program



by Anne Roberts

So much music - so hard to know where to begin! Our students have been having a great time with music. Whether they are babies rocking on their hands and knees while Ms. Anne plays the guitar, or older children learning new songs and movement activities; we have all been having fun!

In **September** the children at Lake Alice enjoyed a "Get Up and Go" theme. This featured songs, books, and movement activities about exercise, healthy eating, outdoor safety, and fire safety. Some of the favorite books were *Monkey and Me* by Emily Gravett (LG-1 and LG-2, creative movement), *Today is Monday* by Eric Carle (Grasshoppers and Adventurers at PKY, healthy food), *Bear Feels Sick* by Karma Wilson (Growing Gators, having a cold), and *May I Bring a Friend?* by Beatrice Schenk Du Regniers (VPK, friendship and manners). Lots of fun movement songs including "Shake My Sillies Out" and "Put on My Dancing Shoes" helped us all to get in the groove. Each music class includes a theme-based rhyming picture book, songs and finger plays, as well as age-appropriate movement games and activities.

The students at Newell Drive learned more about themselves, their feelings, families, and their classmates during their "Getting to Know You" theme. LG-1 also enjoyed *Monkey and Me*, while LG-2 liked the energetic book and song *Bling Blang* by Woody Guthrie (friendship, family, cooperation). *Llama Llama Time to Share* by Anna Dewdney was a big hit (Grasshoppers-Growing Gators, going to a new school) as well as *Follow the Leader* by Erica Silverman (VPK, taking turns, sharing). Activities with bean bags and rhythm instruments were a fun way to work as a group and to learn to keep a steady beat.

In **October** all schools were once again on the same theme; "Down on the Farm" and preparations for our fall festivals. Children in LG-2 through VPK all began to learn song American Sign Language to use when singing about farm animals and for various activities. Some of the best books included, *Over on the Farm* by Christopher Gunson (LG-1, farm animals), *Rise and Shine* by Nancy Carlstrom (LG-2, farm animals), *The Cow Loves Cookies* by Karma Wilson (Grasshoppers and Adventurers-PKY, rhyming words), *10 Orange Pumpkins* by Stephen Savage (Growing Gators, countdown book), and *The Pumpkin Fair* by Eve Bunting (VPK, fall celebrations). This month also featured lots of felt-board stories, puppets, and movement activities to help bring the stories and songs to life.

November found us all saying "We Are Thankful" and singing many songs about fall. Children in LG-1 loved the book *Nuts to You!* by Lois Ehlert (squirrel story) as well as songs, finger plays and movement activities about squirrels. *Let it Fall!* by Mariann Coca-Leffler (LG-2, fall activities) and *Hibernation Station* by Michelle Meadows (Grasshoppers and Adventurers, hibernation) were also very popular. Growing Gators and VPK both enjoyed *Hurry, Hurry* which used animal puppets to help learn how woodland animals use their 5 senses to prepare for the coming winter.

Our "Celebrations around the World" programs will soon be here and we hope to see all of you there. We treasure each and every family and the cultures and traditions that you bring to our community here at Baby Gator. We look forward to having you all come and join us for an evening of songs from around the world, refreshments, and fun art activities with your children. Please see your email for your "Save the Date" notice.

Keep on singing!

Anne Roberts



by Nika Lorenz

Dear Baby Gator Families,

The past few months have been a whirlwind of fun! In September we started our series on Healthy Eating and the 5 Food Groups. Each week we explored a different food group. Everyone enjoyed completing fruit and vegetable relay races, exercising to different grain foods, getting to explore real fruits and vegetables and learning about why each food group is important.

In September we also started the morning mile with the 3, 4 and 5 year old classrooms. Each school had a fun way to start off the morning mile program. Newell Drive decided to have a color run for the first morning mile of the academic school year. It was completely fantastic and everyone had a blast.



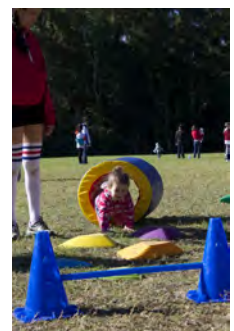
Along with learning about the 5 food groups we also discussed fire safety and street safety. In October, for fire safety month the fire fighters and fire truck came to visit each center. The kids had a blast learning how to stop drop and roll, how to stay low if there is a fire and what it means to be a fire fighter.

For street safety, the classrooms went of street safety walks where we looked for different road signs. The kids focused on holding on to the rainbow rope or our partners hand and looking ahead. We practiced crossing the street and looking both ways. On these walks we got to explore UF's campus and all it has to offer.



In November, we played a variety of fun games and completed different types of obstacle courses. We also had our semiannual Field day on Saturday, November 1st at Hume Field. This fall we invited two early childhood centers, Holy Trinity and My School to participate as well. At field day children and their families explored active games such as pumpkin roll, football toss, soccer kick, parachute play, sack races, 40 yard dash and relay races. With the help of our amazing volunteers we were able to serve over 100 families.

In December, we are going to focus on the importance of physical activity. We will play a variety of sports and movement games. I can't wait to see what sort of adventures we will get in to in December.



Annual Fundraiser-Building The Love



Building the Love!

Save the Date: February 4, 2015
UF Baby Gator 3rd annual benefit fundraiser

Chris Machen & Danette Good invite you to attend the 3rd annual **Building the Love!** fundraising event to benefit UF Baby Gator Child Development Centers, including the completion of "natural" playgrounds and the development of another Baby Gator Center to better serve the needs of UF families.

When: Wednesday, February 4, 2015

Time: 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Where: UF President's House

What: An evening of food, drinks and live and silent auctions with UF soccer coach Becky Burleigh as Master of Ceremonies.

Tickets: \$50 per person

**Reserved childcare will be available at Baby Gator at Lake Alice.*



CALLING ALL PARENTS

Baby Gator projects could not be accomplished without the help and guidance of Baby Gator parents and the Baby Gator Advisory Board. Are you interested in being more involved in the continued development of Baby Gator centers and sustaining the high quality of care and early education offered? Consider taking a seat on the Baby Gator advisory Board. Open seats will be announced in January. The Board's by-laws call for one parent for each 50 children in a center. The Board meets quarterly, January, April, July and October. The Baby Gator Board recently called for the creation of an ad hoc committee to investigate increasing Baby Gator teachers' salaries. The committee will meet at least monthly from January to May to explore and review appropriate salary levels and funding options and make recommendations to the Board. If you would like to join the Board or the ad hoc committee, please contact Director Pam Pallas as ppallas@ufl.edu.

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

Pamela J. Pallas, Ph.D., Director

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Diamond Village center:
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 Diamond Village Rd
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Editor E-mail: aavelino@ufl.edu

Upcoming Events/Closings – Lake Alice, Newell Drive, Diamond Village & PK Yonge

Diamond Village Ribbon Cutting Ceremony-December 3rd

Winter Holidays December 24-January 2nd

Lake Alice & PK Yonge

Closes at noon December 24th
 Closed December 25th- January 2nd

Newell Drive & Diamond Village

Closes at noon December 24th
 Closed December 25 & 26
 Closes at noon on December 31st
 Closed January 1st & January 2nd

Martin Luther King Day January 19th

Lake Alice & PK Yonge Closed

Building The Love Fundraiser February 4th

