



Baby Gator Tales

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

The months have flown by as Baby Gator has been involved in several new initiatives. The re-opening of the newly renovated Newell center was delayed by some unforeseen changes in building codes but the center is now freshly painted and redesigned to improve teachers' ability to see and hear the children at all times. Baby Gator at Diamond Village is fully enrolled and working well. An ad hoc committee of the Baby Gator Advisory Board was formed to investigate options for increasing teacher salaries. Their work has resulted in a petition to the university for decreased operational costs and a request to the Board of Governors for increased state funding for university-based child care. Both are likely to be approved. On a sad note, the decision was made to close the Baby Gator center at PK Yonge. Most UF parents prefer to place their children in an on-campus center so the center did not meet its enrollment goals. By moving the PKY center children to available spaces at Lake Alice and Diamond Village, we were able to accommodate the needs of both the children and their parents.

Building leadership within Baby Gator has also been a focus for the past year. Promoting leadership among early childhood educators

is not just beneficial, it is essential to the development and sustainability of excellence in the early care and education of young children. We recently revamped our organizational structure to better define each administrator's roles and responsibilities and enable each to work more effectively. We encourage promotion from within and strongly support professional development through attendance at conferences, workshops and trainings. Associate Director Stacy Ellis Thomas has devoted countless hours this year to participation in the UF Leadership Academy and Associate Director Kelly Jamison is completing HR sponsored classes on leadership and management. Several teachers have moved into administrative positions and now serve Baby Gator children and families in a different capacity but with the same passion for excellence. Strong leaders help an organization clarify and confirm values, set goals, articulate a vision and chart a course. Baby Gator continues to move forward on a strong base of knowledge, experience and dedication.

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

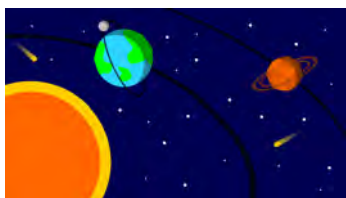
May 2015 Volume 6, Issue 1

Inside this issue:

Lake Alice	2
PK Yonge	13
Newell Drive	15
Diamond Village	24
Music Program	29
PHIT Kids	30
Upcoming Events	31

Lesson Plan Themes

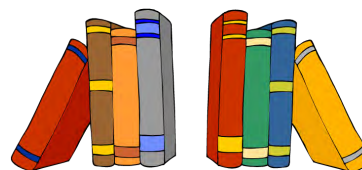
January
 "Into The Galaxy"



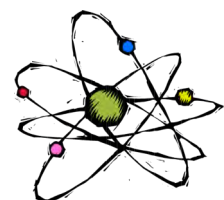
February
 "Languages of Love"



March
 "Marching Through Literacy"



April
 "S.T.E.M."



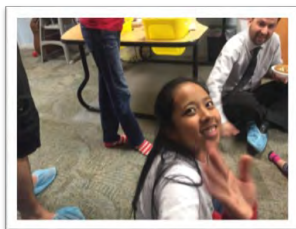
Lake Alice—Daisies & Sweetpeas

The start of the New Year has brought about a lot of changes in the Sweetpea and Daisies classrooms. Many of our friends have and will be turning NUMERO UNO!

Over the past 5 months they have shown signs of outgrowing our classrooms...



In the months leading up to now, we have welcomed two new wonderful teachers to join the Tiny Gators team! Ms. Angie who has been working with Baby Gator as both a volunteer and sub for the past 4 years! Ms. Zaneta recently transferred from the Orange Blossoms classroom to team up with Mrs. Linda in Daisies.



Our annual Valentine's Day ice cream social was a success with so many of our families coming in to spread the love to their babies and friends. We had live musical performances from the McGrail clan who was followed by our guest performers Alex and Gabby!



In March we had ourselves a Thing-Invasion, in lieu of Seuss Week!



In May we explored Lake Alice and our babies painted their interpretation of the lake!



Our babies also transformed into models for the creation of Mother's Day gifts.



Overall the start of the New Year has been great for Tiny Gators and in the time leading up to transition we are looking forward to building many more great memories!

Lake Alice—Tiger Lilies

Tiger Lily News!!!!

The Tiger Lilies have been busy growing and exploring! We are all walking and running and many of us are expressing ourselves with both words and signs. We sit at the "big kids" table for meals and snacks, feed ourselves with forks and spoons and are starting to drink from our "big kid" cups.



We really enjoy being on our playground. We have mastered the slide and can maneuver all of the ride-on toys and mini-cars.

Each month brought new adventures for us!



In February we learned about feelings, people we love and pets we love. We made Valentines for Mom and Dad, feeling monsters, dogs, cats, turtles, snakes and frogs.

"Marching Through Literacy" was our theme for March. We read books by Leo Lionni, Eric Litwin and Eric Carle and made mice, spiders, grouchy ladybugs and, of course, Pete the Cat We also celebrated Saint Patrick's Day with many green activities.

April was STEM (Science, Technology, Environment and Math) Month. We became budding scientists when we painted with colored ice cubes and balloons, used balloons to generate static



electricity, used our own bubble solution, socks, bottles and food coloring to make rainbow bubble caterpillars, made and flew paper airplanes, blew bubbles with Goopy Gak and tested our toys for sinking and floating!



We have enjoyed our time in Tiger Lilies and have learned a lot and now we are eager to expand our horizons when we transition to our new classrooms in a few weeks!



Lake Alice—Orange Blossoms & Sunflowers

Hello everyone! My how time has flown by! The school year is almost done and transitions are set to happen in June. We will miss all of our friends dearly but they have come a long way and are so ready to move up to their new, more advanced classrooms. Over the last several months we have had to "up" our lessons to challenge our students, several of which, have recently turned two years-old. Here are a few of the highlights of the amazing activities we did in the past 5 months.



April brought us the theme "Watch Us Grow," (Ms. Lisa's favorite) where our classes learned about gardening. The Sunflowers enjoyed planting seeds and watering the plants in their new garden. We can't wait to eat some of the veggies that they grow! The Orange Blossoms enjoyed going on nature walks and bug hunts on our playground. Both classes had a great time at our annual egg hunt. Thanks to the generosity of our parents, it was a big hit!



Last but not least, in May we learned about "Our Community Helpers." We got to meet "Amber," the police dog. It was very exciting for our friends to be able to pet her. We also learned about firetrucks and even got to see one up close! It was so much fun!

In January, our theme was "Into the Galaxy," where our children enjoyed learning about the sun, stars, moon, astronauts, and rockets. We enjoyed activities like scarf and flashlight play, to recreate our own version of the "Northern Lights" of Alaska, and playing with large chunks of ice in the water table for an iceberg activity.



In February, where we learned about all things dealing with love and feelings, the Sunflower class enjoyed making "Friendship Soup" that they shared with other BG classes, while the Orange Blossoms learned about all of the different ways to show you care by holding hands, blowing kissing, & saying/signing "I love you."

"Marching through Literacy," our theme for March, is always a fun one for us. We get to do activities and lessons that are themed by our classes favorite books. We enjoyed lessons dedicated to all things "Llama Llama", Dr. Seuss, & Eric Carle.

"Marching through Literacy," our theme for March, is always a fun one for us. We get to do activities and lessons that are themed by our classes favorite books. We enjoyed lessons dedicated to all things "Llama Llama", Dr. Seuss, & Eric Carle.



It has been a very fun & rewarding year for us. Although we will miss our old friends, we are excited to meet our new friends in June. We would also like to take this time to thank all of our BG parents for their help and support. You all showed us a lot of love and appreciation during "Teacher Appreciation" week, and the truth is we couldn't do our jobs without you!

Love,

The Sunflowers & Orange Blossoms



Lake Alice—Buttercups

Bird's Nest



Sign Language I LOVE YOU



Construction Time



Rocket Ship Fun



Balloon Art



Do You See It? (Magnifying Fun)



The Buttercups have had great adventures this Spring semester, learning through play and exploration. Each activity engaged and promoted the Buttercups development. We have also learned about working together as a team and being a school family. They learned so much by having fun and working as a team!

Lake Alice—Marigolds

Greetings Everyone!

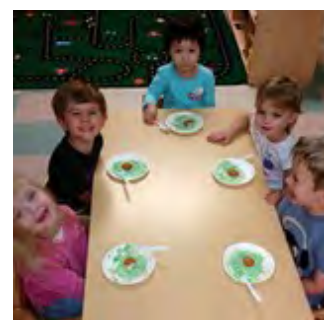
The Marigolds kicked off the New Year with the theme, "Into the Galaxy," and boy, did we have fun there! We learned about the moon, stars, and planets. We also learned about the weather and were introduced to the various clouds—ask us what a big, white, fluffy cloud is called (cumulus cloud). Not only did we focus on the planets and weather, but we also discussed animals that *fly* into the galaxy! We ended the month of January learning about transportation that flies.

February and March were exciting months for the Marigolds. Our theme for February was "Languages of Love," during which we focused on social skills and learned about love, family, and friends. In March, we "Marched into Literacy," and we were exposed to books by Eric Carle and Dr. Seuss! We also enjoyed some exciting activities like making "green eggs", putting "Humpty" back together again, and creating "Pete the Cat."

The theme for the month of April was "nature." Our class' favorite books were, We're Going on a Nature Hunt, and Friends, which spoke about friends exploring the great outdoors. The class used their sense of touch to paint with "worms" (cooked spaghetti). We took our first field trip of the semester to the Butterfly Garden at the Harn Museum. We observed butterflies of many different colors and sizes, enjoyed watching butterflies eat bananas, and had a lot of fun riding the bus to and from the museum!

In May, the Marigolds had their first of many water days, consisting of: water play, mixing colors with our feet, and bubble baths with baby dolls. We celebrated Mother's Day with our "Marigold Mommies" by having a muffin party! We surprised our mommies with pictures that we took at the UF student gardens and a "Mommy Questionnaire." Our friends learned about different people in our UF community (athletes, professors, students, and UF Health) and all the fun that goes on in our Baby Gator community (diversity, community, teamwork). We played soccer like the UF soccer team and pretended to be doctors and professors at UF during dramatic play. We also learned about the importance of keeping our community clean as we helped our teachers find trash during our walk.

Parents, thank you for your continued support and involvement! We really appreciate each and every one of you!



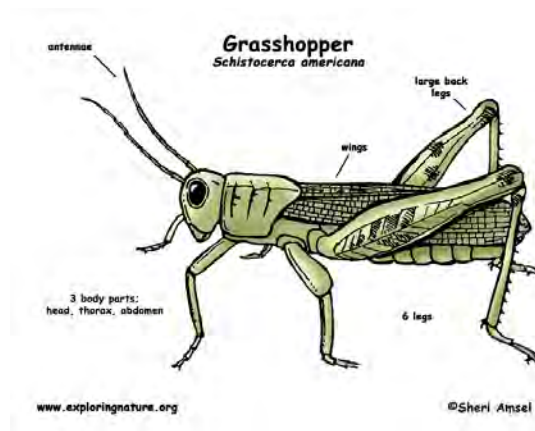
Lake Alice—Grasshoppers

In February, Grasshoppers talked about doing kind things for others. We celebrated Valentine's Day with a "Sock-Hop" for parents, talked about our feelings and talked about friendship.

In March, we started off with celebrating Dr.Suess' Birthday by reading different books by the author and learning about rhyming through different nursery rhymes. We also had fun learning about St. Patrick's Day and making up all kinds of green things. After that we leaped into Spring by learning about flowers and seeds and what makes things grow. Lastly we talked about Spring animals and how to take care of them.

In April, we had a great time learning about recycling, what to recycle and how to recycle. We had a blast with earth week and learning about how to take care of our planet by keeping it clean. We learned about planting seeds and what it takes to plant them. (soil, water and sunlight).

In May, we celebrated Mother's Day by making gifts and having a very special tea party for our mothers with cupcakes and tea. The children were excited about making the cupcakes. We also talked and learned about my community, town, neighborhood and city. We also are learning about the different community helpers (police, firefighters, post office workers, clerks, hair dressers and so on). The G-Hops are enjoying ourselves as we celebrate our community by going on field trips to the Harn museum, community bus ride, Publix and having special guest speakers come and share their jobs with us. It is awesome being a Grasshopper...



Lake Alice—Bumblebees

Spring Greetings from the Bumblebees!

Bumblebees have been very busy with activities and events the past few months. We have been planting the seeds for success!

The theme "Languages of Love" allowed the Bumblebees to talk about friendships and doing kind things for others. They 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 "Cupcakes & Cupid" love-fest; we ate yummy homemade cupcakes, painted colorful creations and took great "selfies" with our friends and family. It was a great time! We ended the month with healthy habits and dental health.

In March, we celebrated Dr. Seuss' birthday where we read lots of Dr. Seuss books and celebrated by wearing a different color for each day of the week. We helped "Humpty Dumpty" get put back together again after his untimely fall. "The Lorax" who speaks for the trees, made an appearance in our classroom and taught us the value of being kind to our earth, especially our "truffula trees."

April brought us jumping into Spring with all kinds of science and nature activities; we visited the Community Garden, logged our scientific findings in our garden journals, created our own abstract rainbows, learned about all the colors in a rainbow and went on a spring "Egg Hunt." According to the Bumblebees, they loved designing and wearing their own fashionable tie-dye tee shirts. We also celebrated Earth Day and learned about recycling and being kind to "Mother Earth and Mother Nature," as we pledged to be #1 Recyclers by keeping nature and our environment clean. We even created "Rosie the Robot" using all recycled materials.

So far, May has proven to be a fun-filled month talking about "Community Helpers." We've been dressing-up and pretending that we have important jobs, such as chefs, firefighters, police officers, doctors, etc. in our community. You never know what we will become when we grow up!



A special **GOOD JOB** goes out to all of the Bumblebees for being great helpers—they are all growing up so fast and showing such a strong sense of personal and social responsibility. We will miss you when you transition to the next class in June! We feel privileged to have spent this year with your family and to have shared in your child's development. Our very best wishes for a healthy and happy



Lake Alice—Dragonflies

The Untold Tale of the DRAGONFLIES:

Once upon a time, there was a group that was the most courageous, funniest, brilliant, and colorful dragonflies you ever did see. Among these dragonflies was an ...

Amazing Adonis, who never left a fellow dragonfly out.

Big Ben, whose personality was larger than himself.

Beaming Brandon, who always listened and flew in a straight line.

Electrifying Emma, who put a smile on everyone's face.

Elated Eliana, who was the happiest to fly.

Empathetic Ethan, who always made sure everyone was taken care of.

Famous Fedor, who was known for bringing joy to others.

Hilarious Henri, who made other dragonflies feel better with a good laugh.

Happy Hope, who brightened up the dragonflies' day.

Jubilant Jayson, who had a laugh like no other.

Joyful James, who had an emotional bond with each dragonfly.

Notoriously Kind Knox, who solved everyone's problems with a hug.

Open-hearted Olivia, who made sure every dragonfly was protected.

Outgoing Odelia, whose playfulness was contagious.

Radical Renata, who always flew with the flow and was a team player.

Splendid Sam, who was always a delight to be around.

Superb Shivank, whom everyone enjoyed playing with.

Talented Thomas, who brought the dragonflies the most interesting toys, and

Youthful Yolin, who always craved a good adventure.

Now it wasn't always smooth flying for these dragonflies. You see, they had some work to do and had to overcome some obstacles. But together with their leaders, both parents and teachers, they worked on :sharing and taking turns; using their words to express their problems, feelings, and emotions; and

becoming strong, independent, and loving Dragonflies. All in all, the Dragonflies created many lasting memories and unforgettable friendships.



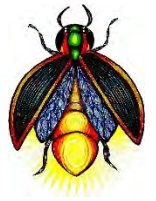
Peace - Love - Dragonflies

Lake Alice—Fireflies

Firefly News...



We have worked very hard getting our wonderful Fireflies ready for Kindergarten! We are so sad to see them go, but very excited for them to start camp!



We have had a lot of great fun these past few months with a visit from "Elsa" and "Spiderman", a visit from the fire truck, and a visit from a police officer. We took many great field trips, celebrated birthdays, and had a blast at Graduation!



We had a wonderful year learning and growing with your children. We look forward to a great Summer and a new school year!

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

Mrs. Stacy Mrs. Sharon

Lake Alice—Ladybugs

Ladybug

We have worked 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 a lot of great fun this past year with making butter, shucking corn, Fall Festival, Halloween, our Thanksgiving Extravaganza, visit from Spiderman and Elsa, demolition of our old playground, our many walks exploring UF trails, fun adventures in the classroom, and Graduation! On a sad note, we lost Miss Shanon to the Firefly room so that she could have earlier hours to spend more time with her family. On a very happy note, we have been lucky to bring on Miss Dee to the Ladybug Classroom. Our VPK Team is a "Powerhouse of Knowledge" and we have a great deal of love for our children!!!

In closing, with our Final Newsletter of 2014/2015 Class, we would like to say that it has been our absolute pleasure being a part of your child's life and the beginning of their academic success!

Miss Cyndi, Miss Shanon and Miss Dee



**"EVERY CHILD IS GIFTED,
THEY JUST UNWRAP THEIR
PACKAGES AT DIFFERENT
TIMES."**

Have a Wonderful Summer!



Food For Thought....

Character, moral fiber, an inner compass ... these things lay the foundation for a happy, healthy future. They matter more than any report card or trophy ever will.

None of us can force character on our kids, and at age 10 or 15 character won't mean much. Children care about short-term gratification, but we, as parents, know better. We know that what will matter at 25, 30, and 40 is not how far they once threw the football, or whether they made cheerleader, but how they treat others and what they think of themselves. If we want them to build character, confidence, strength, and resilience, we need to let them face adversity and experience the pride that follows when they come out stronger on the other side.

It's hard to see our children fall, but sometimes we have to. Sometimes we have to ask ourselves whether intervening is in their best interest. There are a million ways to love a child, but in our quest to make them happy, let us stay mindful that sometimes it takes short-term pain to earn long-term gain.

Kari Kampakis in the *Huffington Post*, 3/3/2014 "[10 Common Mistakes Parents Today Make \(Me Included\)](#)."

Baby Gator at P.K. Yonge—Voyagers

Baby Gators said "Goodbye" to preschool and "Hello" to Kindergarten, and we asked them:
What was your favorite thing about Baby Gator?

- Zane- Going to centers, playing outside, going to the planetarium.
- Knox- Drawing, planetariums, the teachers, the playground and birthday parties
- George L- Playing with friends, being outside, using Legos and playing in kitchen and music with Mrs. Anne
 - Robert- Magnet tiles and housekeeping,
- Morgan- Dancing, singing, exercising, projects, music with Mrs. Anne and friends and teachers.
 - Khloe- Art, singing, graduation, field trips, playing.
- Arjun- Playing with the mud, sand, art things and my teachers too.
- Corbin- Playing with my best friends, housekeeping, magnets, science center, morning mile and PHIT Kids. I love experiments.
 - Fangbing- Art center.
- Sydney- Art activities, Neuronet, playing with my best friend Sammie, listening to stories, dance parties.
- Samantha: Coloring, painting, making cards, going to the library, playing with toys and hugging my teachers.
 - Ben- Playing with ladybugs and George Li. And magnets.
- Andrew- I liked the trips to the planetarium, zoo, library and my teachers cause they are nice to me like my friends.
 - Rilyn- Phit kids, fields trips, lunch time and mud parties.
 - Melina- Kitchen, playing around with things.
 - Collin- Playing and the field trip to the planetarium.
 - Landon- Toys and magnets.

The Voyagers enjoyed a field trip to the library and had special visitors in the classroom. Mrs. Lisa came to read to the children as we celebrated a month of literacy and Officer Holmes came by with Boomer as we learned about our community helpers. The class wrapped up the year with a mud party, a talent show and finally, a great graduation ceremony!



Baby Gator at P.K. Yonge—Adventurers

Spring has arrived in the Adventurer's classroom! We have been planting flowers for our mothers, going on nature walks, and talking about the changing seasons. As the weather started to warm up, we went outside for some of our centers. The Adventurers especially enjoyed outdoor story time. We also took a little trip to the post-box down the street to mail letters to our parents.

We also had some special visitors in our class. They read Dr. Seuss's Bartholomew and the Ooblek and then they showed us how to make our own "ooblek." We had lots of fun getting messy with them! Our other visitors were a bit fuzzier! We got to meet some chicks and spent some time playing with them and feeding them.

This month, we have several more guests coming to visit. For our focus on Community, we have some community helpers coming to tell us about their jobs. A police officer, a nurse, and a construction worker are all coming to share with us. After their visits, the Adventurers are going to have the opportunity to try out these jobs for themselves, with costumes and toys featuring different community helpers.

Our biggest adventure was our field trip to the Florida Museum of Natural History. We took a long walk to the bus stop, passing the big construction site by the hospital. A police officer came and helped us cross the busy road. After a quick bus ride, we arrived at the museum and toured several exhibits. We saw animals, plants, fossils and butterflies! We took two buses to get back to Baby Gator and we arrived just in time for lunch. Boy, were we hungry!

Thanks for a great year of adventures!

Ms. Liz and Ms. Deb



Newell Drive—Rainbowfish

The Rainbow Fish class opened in February, and Tereza, Esme, and Jessica all started! After some time the girls all became adjusted and began to explore our new classroom. They were able to play in water and sand and also learn to crawl over some fun, foam stairs! As several friends began to become more steady crawlers, Jessica began to walk! Esme and Tereza are both crawling now. How exciting!

These three girls were getting a little lonely, but luckily Nargess, Timothy, and Malia were able to start in the class! Having more friends in class really helped to develop our social skills and interactions through play. The Rainbow Fish babies love to sit and babble to each other and make such silly faces!

In our class, we have had several babies that are new to preschool, but we've been busy painting and creating lots of artwork to frame! They really enjoyed painting with foam paint and squishing it between their fingers. Bubbles have also become a class favorite!

There have been lots of changes and growth in the Rainbow Fish class, and we look forward to what the summer brings!

With love,
Rebecca



“The littlest feet make the biggest footprints
in our hearts.”

Newell Drive—Sunfish

Hello from the Sunfish class!! What an exciting few months since we moved into our new classroom with our super awesome babies. It has been a wonderful challenge learning how to balance bottles, naps, changes, tummy time and whatever else our little fishes need. Here are our favorite things about each child:

Christopher's smile and percussion skills

Tala's ability to get into absolutely everything and still look so adorable

Natalie's dancing and love for music

Elise's dimples and thighs and changing table wiggles

Parker's squeals and perfect head

Addie's tongue and her ability to totally work a room

Ethan's incredible facial expressions and dancer legs

Ellie's luscious head of hair and drive-by classroom appearances

Thank you so much for sharing your babies with us, and for being patient while we acquired our infant sea legs.

Miss Nina and Miss Angie are heading back to Suite Four, so we'll see you guys around!!



Newell Drive—Starfish

The Starfish class has had a lot of exciting adventures these past couple of months. In March we learned all about Marching through Literacy and we used the Eric Carle theme and our Starfish dressed up as little caterpillars who turned into butterflies. In April we learned all about STEM and helping out our environment by learning how to recycle and making beautiful art projects out of recycled paper, water bottles and egg cartons. This month were learning all about Community Helpers and how important they are to the community we live in. We have used imaginary play to be firefighters and paramedics. We also practiced being doctors and nurses by administering medicine to stuffed animals. The Starfish class has made a lot of great memories over the last few months. The teachers have really enjoyed watching them make new friends and become independent by using their words and expressing their feelings to their teachers and peers. It has been a very successful and enriching experience for us all!



“They may forget what you said, but they’ll never forget how you made them feel.”

Newell Drive—Sealions

The Sea Lions have been very busy the past three months learning many new skills. We can now: eat with a fork, wash our hands in the sink, walk to the playground, and say many new words! We enjoyed the Marching into Literacy theme in March. We loved the Eric Carle books, especially From Head to Toe! We had fun playing with many different puppets from happy faces to firetrucks!

In the STEM month (April) we enjoyed making sensory bottles, putting rice and macaroni into the bottles, dumping it and shaking them up! It was lots of fun! Our favorite book was Who Said Read. We made stop and go signs and practiced this concept.

The Sea Lions really enjoyed our Community Helpers theme this month, especially learning about fire fighters and the police. One of our favorite activities was exploring gravity painting outside on the fence.

Julie & Karen



Newell Drive—Seahorses

The seahorses are doing great! Everyone is growing up so fast . They're all eating table food and most of them are walking.

They're all doing sign language for their basic needs and learning to say more and more words each day. They really enjoy going on the playground and exploring the out doors . They all really love music and PHIT kids. We are very excited on how well they are all learning and growing.



“A smile from a child is packaged sunshine and rainbows.”

Newell Drive—Whales

Hello everybody! We have enjoyed our Spring here in the Whales class. We have learned about our UF Community as well as "Neighborhoods." We had a great visit with a Police officer (on a motorcycle-oh yeah!) and have created anywhere from 'stick people' and communities, to being a fireman! It was interesting to see the children's reaction when we took a ride on the Campus bus around Lake Alice! (And we did say hi to our fellow Baby Gator's when we drove by.)

Mr. Hassan will be missed as his last day was Friday, May 15th and sweet Elizabeth who moved Wednesday to Miami.

We will bid them good luck as we move towards our big transition day in June.

Your child has gone on several "calm walks," as we like to call them and have visited with Mr. Alligator 3 times!

Learning is fundamental for Early Childhood, so know that your child is flourished around a comfortable communicative environment, full of imagination! Keep up the good work with Potty training at home; we should have all in underwear in no time.

Remember to do the Potty dance!!
Arrivederci!
-Miss Jackie



**"Early Childhood Education is the breeding ground of creativity."
-K.E.W.**

Newell Drive—Manta Rays

Good news! The Manta Ray's classroom discovered the Diamond Village playground,. We have been having lots of fun walking to the playground and playing outdoors. This playground gives children the opportunity to play in the dramatic areas and develop their gross motor skills as they climb the castle or the gym! In addition, during circle time we are practicing numbers from 1 to 20 in English, Spanish, and ASL. Also, while practicing the ABC's with one of our new puzzles we have been practicing animals in Spanish too! We are having lots of fun in the classroom! For the upcoming transition, we are talking to the children about how much fun we had as Manta Rays but they are growing fast, and now that they are big boy and girls they need to go to the Whales classroom to keep learning more. The Manta Rays have had the opportunity to share time with the new teachers in the classroom and on the playground to make this transition easy for them. We are sad to see our Manta Rays go but we wish them the best days at school having fun and learning lots! We also know that they are going to be in good hands with

Ms. Jackie and Ms. Katie!

-Ms Lindsey & Ms. Dagmarie



Newell Drive—Dolphins

The month of May we focused on Community helpers, including Emergency vehicles.

Along with touring campus and the hospital, thanking all the Community helpers we see, we put our fine motor skills to the test and we created a yummy treat to eat. When we studied firemen and discussed what emergency vehicle they drive we created an awesome treat to resemble a FIRE TRUCK!!! We sure had fun!!

We also created a very fun school bus using recognizable shapes!! We enjoyed circle time as if we were riding on the school bus and Miss. Katie was our bus driver.



Ms. Lorene

Ms. Lorene is the wonderful cook at Baby Gator Diamond Village. She arrives bright and early every morning to start prepping and cooking meals for the children. She greets everyone with a cheerful good morning and a big smile on her face. The pleasant smells from her cooking fill up the building. When anyone first walks into the building, they are likely to comment on the delightful smells and say that they wish they could join us for lunch.

Ms. Lorene has a beautiful heart and soul. Her warm laughter fills up the room and her smile puts you at ease. She loves to visit with you and genuinely cares about how you are doing. She does all that she can to make you feel loved and cared for and she never complains. Her food is delicious and makes everyone happy. Everything she says or does is with other people in mind. She is hard working, selfless, and kind. Our staff, teachers, and children love and adore her. Every day the children surround her with hugs and ask questions such as, “What’s for lunch, Ms. Lorene?” They also like to remind her when their birthdays are so she can make them a cake or other treats. She also indulges the teachers and staff with pies, cakes, and other treats from time to time!

I asked some of the children what they like about Ms. Lorene. Below are the wonderful things they had to say.

Mia F. – She bakes us good food. I like when she made me cupcakes for my birthday.

Marian K. – I like Ms. Lorene because she always makes me happy and she always makes us good food and we match!

Emma M. – I love Ms. Lorene because she makes us shepherd’s pie and I love shepherd’s pie. I like the breakfasts she makes.

Emma G. – I like when Ms. Lorene comes and gives us snacks because I can say hi to her.

Anjali U. – I like Ms. Lorene because she makes good chicken nuggets.

Siddhanth R. – I love when she cooks because I love her food. I love her pizza. She’s so kind.

Liana C. – She makes me happy. I love her food.

Jinning Z. – Ms. Lorene is a good chef (or cooker) because she is the cooker at our school. Ms. Lorene is nice to me.

Miles P. – When Ms. Lorene cooks yummy stuff I like it and I eat all of it. I like when she makes macaroni and cheese, chicken with sauce, and white and yellow rice.

Thank you, Ms. Lorene, for all that you do. We love you!

By: Alyssa Beto



Diamond Village—Blue Jays

This spring the Blue Jay's class has been very busy learning and exploring. We started the year learning about the different planets of the solar system and all things that fly. We decided to visit the butterflies at the Butterfly Museum. The Blue Jays loved learning and seeing the different stages of a butterfly. Like butterflies, the Blue Jays grew and became more independent. We no longer use the rope to go on walks. Now, we walk hand in hand with our friends.

In March, we marched through literacy by doing activities from all of our favorite authors like Dr. Seuss. We celebrated his birthday by dressing up in wacky clothes and doing activities from all of his amazing books.

Conducting experiments and learning about STEM was really fun as well. The Blue Jays talked about the "erupting volcano" for days. We created a class computer and camera using recycled materials. We visited the Museum of Natural History with the Cardinals. The discovery room was our favorite part. We got to excavate fossils, do puzzles, and put stuff through the wind tunnel.

Learning about the community and community helpers has been very fun. The Blue Jays were really excited to learn that some of their favorite people such as Firefighters, Police Officers and Construction Workers are all community helpers. They wore their badges with great pride as they pretended to be Junior Officers, and even got to explore UFPD's huge motorcycles.

As the end of the school year approaches, Mrs. Ari and Ms. Terika are deeply saddened that our little Blue Jays will be blossoming into beautiful Cardinals. However, we look forward to starting our new journey with our new sea creatures at Newell Drive.

Farewell Diamond Village and Aloha Newell Drive!



Diamond Village—Cardinals

The Cardinals blasted off into 2015 with the theme "Into the Galaxy"! During the month, the class created each planet using different materials, that was then put into their own "My Solar System Book" and a class collage.

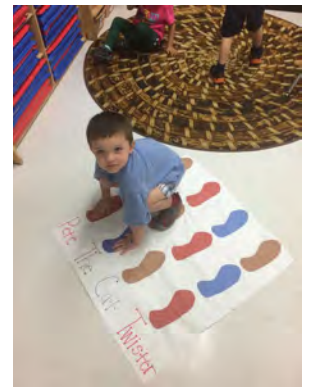
February's theme was Languages of Love. One of the most memorable activities was our Valentine's Day card exchange, in which the children had fun passing out the cards they made and brought for their friends!

In March, we celebrated our favorite authors! In honor of Dr. Seuss' birthday, we made truffala trees, ooegy goegy oobleck, and (our favorite) Lorax paper plate faces. For Eric Carle week, we made our own very hungry caterpillar out of clothes pin. He currently resides on top of our classroom phone. The class made muffins for Laura Numeroff's, If You Give A Moose a Muffin, and played a Pete the Cat "twister" game using different colored shoes.

April was S.T.E.M month. The Cardinals put on their lab coats for "Science Week" and participated in many experiments! Using droppers to place colored vinegar into a tray of baking soda and watching it fizz up was a class hit. We explored our engineering skills by making blueprints, constructing towers using toothpicks and marshmallows, and tinkering with screws, bolts, and other building tools in our "Tinkering Station". The class took a field trip with the Blue Jays to visit the Natural Museum of History. We also observed Earth Day by reusing recycled materials to make crafts and the famous "Mt. Cardinal" that lived on Ms. Alyssa's desk for most of the month.

May has been all about our community! We were visited by officers from the police department who talked to us about safety and let us explore their two motorcycles! The children learned about the post office and mail carriers by making pictures that they placed in envelopes with stamps and walking down to the mailbox to send them to their homes. The class put on their crafted tool belts as we walked down to the construction site on Newell to see the big machinery. We helped the class baby dolls by becoming dentists and brushing their teeth and putting on our scrubs to "doctor them up" with stethoscopes, wraps, bandaids, and more. We recently built and decorated our own community consisting of a library, school, hospital, and office building using cardboard boxes and recycled materials!

As transitions near, we are sad to say goodbye to our Cardinal friends but are excited about their next moves. We have had a wonderful year and have loved watching them mature and learn new things!



Diamond Village—Owls



The Owls have had a whirlwind of fun learning through experience and play! From experiments involving Mentos and Coke, to filling up a balloon with vinegar and baking soda, its been quite the journey. In March for our Marching Through Literacy theme, we read fairy tales and ended the month with a huge Cinderella ball! The kids dressed up as princes and princesses (plus we even had crown shaped pizza!).

April was filled with preparation for graduation! The Owls looked as flawless as 5 year olds can be on their big day and even took a moment to squish Miss Stacy after the ceremony. The Owls class also had two weeks full of activities surrounding Community Helpers in which they were doctors, visited a post office, visited by police officers, firefighters and even performed "surgery"!

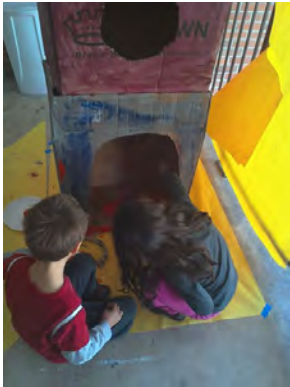
As always, a big thank you to all of the Owl parents for their support in helping make this year one of the best!

-Stacy



Diamond Village—Sparrows

January



February



March



April



May



Welcome, Mr. Todd!



Diamond Village—Robins

To all of our friends,

Our unit in February was "All You Need is Love and Friendship". We talked about friendships and doing things for others. We made cards for our friends and the children in the hospital. We made shirts for our Valentine's Day Party. The children made heart cookies. They thought it was so much fun measuring and stirring. The decorating was the best.

In March the Robins enjoyed "Marching into Literacy" by celebrating Dr. Seuss's birthday. We read lots of Dr. Seuss books and we even cooked green eggs and ham. Yum, yum! We had a Cinderella Ball where we had fun singing, dancing, and pretending we were in a castle. We also made a delicious castle cake.

April was a great month. We talked a lot about recycling. Wow, did the children love this unit. We took several walks in the neighborhood while picking up trash. We made the "Earth" out of coffee filters and planted beans that the children have enjoyed watching grow.

Our unit in May is Community Helpers. We went on a field trip to the library to see a production of the story "The Wide Mouth Frog". We had surgery day where we all pretended to be surgeons for the day. Wow were we busy. We talked about what a veterinarian does and how they take care of animals big and small. We even had a visit from a cute little dog named Honey. Thank you Brooke and Gina for bringing in your special little pet.

As we close for another year, I would like to say thank you to all of the parents who entrusted me to be their child's teacher. It was my greatest privilege to see each one of them grow day by day and see how they have developed in their learning. Have a great summer.

~ Ms. Cheryl



Music Program



By: Anne Roberts

The halls are alive with the sound of music! Baby Gators of all ages have been having a great time in music class this Spring. Whether we were singing, playing rhythm instruments, dancing, learning new finger plays or using American Sign Language, we have had a busy and fun time. March's theme was "Marching into Literacy" and April's was Community Helpers. Read more below about some of our favorite music activities and books. Many of you already know of my love for children's literature along with my love of music. Putting the two together makes learning music and language fun, memorable, and allows children to experience a new method of discovering rhythm and rhyme.

LG-1 learned about spring and the changes it brings as they listened to *In the Tall, Tall Grass* by Denise Fleming and *Over in the Meadow* by Raffi. We practiced our ASL skills with "The Butterfly Song" and "Arabella Miller". May was Community Helpers month where they saw Cookie Monster from Sesame Street bake dozens of cookies for hungry customers in *Baker, Baker Cookie Maker* by Linda Hayward.

LG-2 enjoyed songs and books about nature in April with a musical version of Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and *Pete the Cat: Wheels on the Bus* was one of many community helpers in May. All lessons featured plenty of moving to the beat of the songs, using our "shaky eggs", finger plays, and stories on the flannel board.

Grasshoppers, Cardinals, and Adventurers - Flower Garden by Eve Bunting was a favorite book in April as we saw a father and daughter create a window box garden using rhyme and song. In May's *Bee-Bim Bop* by Linda Sue Park each class learned more ASL for a variety of foods as we sang the song "Old MacDonald Had a Store".

Growing Gators - We explored nature and good foods in the songs "Making Moosic" by Anna Moo and the book *The Whole Green World* by Tony Johnston. In May a favorite community helper story and song was *The Seals on the Bus* by Lenny Hort followed by dancing to "The Wheels on the Bus Rap" sung by Jack Hartmann.

VPK - Congratulations were in order for our Future Gators graduates! They performed beautifully in their graduation ceremony on April 24th and sang several songs including "It's a Small World" using ASL and "Baby Gator, It's Time to Say Good-bye" based on the song "Doo-Wah-Diddy". In May they thoroughly enjoyed learning about fire safety in the story about "Little Rosalie"; a song by Steve Roslonek. You can watch this with your child on YouTube and sing along with the very addicting lyrics.

Most of the books I use in my music lessons come from the public library. Ask your children which were their favorites and you can pick up a copy to read (or sing!) it with your child. Also, if you are interested in learning any of the American Sign Language that we use in lessons you may want to visit www.babysignlanguage.com. This is the site I use most frequently. It is geared toward young children and features a dictionary with pictures, flash cards to print out, and videos for most of the signs. I hope you enjoy both singing and signing with your children!





by Nika Lorenz



PHIT Kids (Physical Healthy Interactive Training)

What's happening in the World of PHIT Kids?

This spring semester has been fantastic! We had two wonderful interns, Lauren and Bre working with our PHIT kids program this Spring semester. They both loved teaching all the different age groups about safety, importance of healthy eating and exercising.

The children learned about keeping your heart healthy by eating right, brushing your teeth and exercising. They also learned all about oral health. Dental students even came out to help the children learn about the importance of keeping your mouth healthy.

With summer right around the corner, the children learned about sun safety and hydration. Along with all these important health and safety lessons the children participated in some really fun physical activities. Some of the highlights were; soccer and ball play, parachute play, relay races and obstacle courses.

Special Events this spring semester:

We had several special events this spring semester. Our main two were Sport's night and Field day. For Sport's night, children of all ages came out to play with the UF girls' soccer team! Our semi – annual Field Day was a huge success! We had over 100 families come out to play. For additional information about our family events please see the Baby Gator Website.

This year our amazing three, four, and five year-olds ran over 10,000 miles during the morning mile! Each of the centers thought that was cause to celebrate so we had morning mile celebrations. These celebrations involved fun physical activities, water play, special walks and watermelon. We are extremely proud of our kids!

Look out for our next special event.

On Tuesday, June 16th Baby Gator is partnering up with Chuy's for an all-day fundraiser. Because of how successful our first fundraiser was now Chuy's will donate 15% of your total food purchases and nonalcoholic beverages to Baby Gator. Remember carry our orders are included as well. Hope to see you there!



Sincerely,
Nika Lorenz





**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

Diamond Village center:

Building 305
Diamond Village Rd
Phone: 352-294-2243
Fax: 352-294-2257



Editor E-mail: aavelino@ufl.edu

Upcoming Events/Closings—Lake Alice, Newell Drive, & Diamond Village

Upcoming Events:

Chuy's Fundraiser: Tuesday, June 16th
Transitions: Monday, June 8th
Summer Camp: June 8-August 7

Center Closings

All Centers Are Closed On:

Independence Day: Friday, July 3rd
Labor Day: Monday, September 7th
Thanksgiving Day & Day After: November 26th & 27th
Winter Holiday: December 25-January 1

Lake Alice Is Also Closed On:

UF Homecoming: Friday, November 6
Veteran's Day: Wednesday, November 11

