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The season of giving gifts is upon us. At Baby Gator the gifts of teaching and learning are shared year round. Along with colors, shapes and letters, we help the children to learn to be kind, considerate, thoughtful and compassionate. A can of green beans for the Bread of the Mighty Food Bank or a hand-drawn thank you card for a veteran can bring a smile to the giver and the receiver. Our Thanksgiving feasts were attended by over 160 parents and friends this year. What a delight to share this meal with so many and say “thanks” for all the thoughtful gifts of time, energy and support families give to Baby Gator. This year’s focus on professional development has our teachers giving the gift of their teaching skills to others. Baby Gator staff have presented at local, state and national conferences, sharing Baby Gator’s approaches to teaching, health, social development and family support. The early childhood field has benefited from their sharing of their knowledge and experience. Baby Gator centers are truly places that are “just right”.

Wishing you a happy holiday season and good health and great joy in 2016.
Lesson Plan Themes

September
“Our Florida”

October
“Down on the Farm”

November
“We Give Thanks for Fall”

December
“Celebrating Holidays Around the World”
Upcoming Events

When: Saturday, February 6th, 2016

Time: 6pm—9pm

Where: Historic UF President’s House

What: An evening of food, drinks, and a live and silent auction

Tickets: $50 per person (online sales now available!)

If you cannot attend, please consider making a donation. Visit our website at www.babygator.ufl.edu to make your contribution!

We sincerely appreciate any donation amount and thank our wonderful families and supporters for everything that they do!

Can’t go because you need a babysitter? Look no further!

Baby Gator at Lake Alice will be providing babysitting for children from infancy until age 10 from 5:30pm to 9:30pm. The cost will be $25 for the first child and $10 for each additional child. Spaces are limited, so reserve your spot as soon as possible!

We hope to see you there!
Fall has been a busy time for the Tiny Gators; we have been engaged in many fun and exciting activities these past few months! Time really does fly when you’re having fun!

In September we celebrated Florida during the “My Florida” theme. We had so much fun learning about where we’re all from here in Florida. The babies got to see all the different cities where their friends have lived; the Sweet Pea’s door was transformed into Florida where their locations were pinned on the map for a visual representation of their origins. We also celebrated the University of Florida and its sports by creating our own orange and blue jerseys and Gator student identification cards! The tiny gators then got the opportunity to go outside and play football – Team Babies vs. Team Teachers. The babies won 30-0!

During October we had our first ever Dr. Seuss themed Halloween SPOOKtacular – a party which allowed the Daisies, Sweet Peas, and their parents to interact with one another all while enjoying the healthy Fro-Yo bar, the ball pool, and showing off their adorable costumes! The Tiny teachers joined in on the fun as well by bringing Seuss to life and entering the Halloween costume contest dressed as many different popular Dr. Seuss characters. October also took us “Down on the Farm” where the babies got to learn about an array of farm animals. They used their feet to make cows, finger-painted a red barn, and explored cotton balls while making sheep! They also engaged in sensory exploration while using puffy paint to make pumpkins!

The theme “Giving Thanks” during November has allowed the Tiny Gators to talk about friendships, family, and being kind to others. We went on friendship walks where Sweet Peas and Daisies got to sit in the strollers next to one another and spend time together. The teachers also helped the babies explore their emotions and what it means to have feelings by singing songs such as “If You’re Happy and you Know It” and making the facial expressions to match each feeling in the song. The babies have learned to clap their hands, shout hooray, and smile when the song says to! We learned about being kind to others by having gentle hands and sharing things with our friends. We ended the month with Baby Gators’ Annual Thanksgiving Holiday feast where families came to enjoy a savory lunch with their children.

All of the Tiny Gators are becoming so mobile and developing such distinct personalities. We enjoy watching them interact with one another; many of them have developed very special bonds! We feel privileged to have spent this time with your family and to have shared in your child’s development. Our very best wishes for an exciting Fall and Happy Holidays to come!
Hello everyone, long time no read! This has been a very busy school year. We have gotten a new batch of little ones that are growing and developing very fast thanks to the sensory packed lessons we created.

In July we learned about the great outdoors. We explored keeping cool, outdoor sports, animals, and the beach with our friends. It was a lot of fun!

Next we “Expressed Ourselves Through Art” in the month of August. The children learned to paint and color using all kinds of interesting and unusual things such as vegetables! They also got to paint to music and learned to play lots of different instruments.

In September, when the theme was “Our Florida,” we learned all about our awesome state. We learned about the foods that are grown here, the different animals that are native to Florida, and theme parks. We also explored sand and made sand art in honor of all of the great beaches.

October’s theme was “Down on the Farm,” where the kids got to learn about farm animals, vegetables, fruits, & tractors. We also learned about all things spooky or creepy crawly in honor of Halloween. The Orange Blossoms & Sunflowers were too cute in their costumes for our annual costume parade and they had a blast at the Fall Festival that afternoon. They got down & dirty with fun sensory activities like grabbing for apples, dirt & worm dig, and wet noodles & Jell-O play. A big thank-you to all of our parents for donating the needed supplies so that our festival could be a success. We couldn’t have done it without you!!

We are approaching a very busy and fun time of the year with Thanksgiving and other holidays fast approaching. So we will have so much exciting news to report.

Until next time!!
The Tiger Lilies have been busy growing and exploring the past several months. We are all drinking out of sippy cups, sleeping on cots and sitting at the “Big Kids” table for meals. Many of us are walking around all by ourselves, using words and signs to communicate and feeding ourselves with spoons. So many milestones have been accomplished in such a short period of time!

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

In September our theme was “Our Florida”. We learned about Florida Wildlife, Florida Habitats, Florida Fruits and Vegetables and Florida Sports. We made tortoises, birds, alligators, bears and butterflies. We played with swamp, everglade and prairie animals. We tasted strawberries, corn, bananas, carrots and blueberries. We played with footballs, basketballs and baseballs. We ended the month with our field trip to the Butterfly Museum. We really enjoyed seeing all the different butterflies, flowers and plants.

October’s theme 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 painted leaves and a barn and made sheep, horses, cows, chicks, 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 Indian Corn, pumpkin pie slices, Mayflower ships and turkeys and we played with pumpkin play dough. The highlight of the month was our Parent/Child Thanksgiving Feast.

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

Before closing we would like to wish Ms. Joada much luck and happiness in her new career path – Medical School!!!! Her last day with us is December 18th. We are sad to see her leave because she has been a wonderful teacher and co-worker but we know that this is her lifelong dream. We love you Ms. Joada and we know that you are going to be a terrific doctor!!!!!!!

Happy Holidays!

The Tiger Lilies
During the Fall Semester, the Buttercups experienced a lot of hands-on learning, ranging from sensory play and nature exploration.

Secretly, they are learning classification and fine motor skills. They just think they are pretend entomologists, though. Science is fun!

Our Buttercups are “Fall”ing head over heels in love with these colorful leaves!

Buttercups can get messy, too! As they play in the dirt, the Buttercups children are enhancing their sensory and social skills in this fun group activity.

Here we show the Buttercups exploring flowers and counting seeds, including how seeds grow into flowers.

This Buttercup is practicing her pre-writing skills using a feather and play-dough.

Lake Alice Bridge is one of the Buttercups’ favorite spots to see wildlife, trees, and nature!

Fall Festival Fun and Adventures!
Greetings Everyone!

The Tulips kicked off the month of September with the theme, “Our Florida”. Our topics for this month included, “The State of Florida,” “Florida Wildlife,” “Florida Waters,” and “The University of Florida.” We learned about the shape of Florida, foods grown in Florida, and its many beaches. The Tulips also enjoyed creating Florida animals such as alligators, bald eagles, and bears. We ended September with our very first field trip around the University of Florida—oh, did we have a blast! We caught a bus to the Hub and walked through Turlington Plaza to Century Tower. Then, we walked to the “French Fries” and got to explore the “fries.”

The month of October was an exciting time for the Tulips! 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 the student garden to explore nature and discover different types of foods that can be grown on the farm. 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, color pumpkins, and played with live worms! The following week, the Tulips dressed up in so adorable costumes for our Halloween Parade.

During the month of November, the Tulips 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?” Our class made Thank You cards for their parents. Another highlight of the month was our Thanksgiving Feast that we were able to enjoy with some of our Tulips 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!
We are in complete awe that it is already coming to the end of 2015! It has been a complete blessing to have your child within our class. It is already crazy to see just how much they have grown since we received them in June! Our little GHops have been very busy learning and growing; &we’d love to give you a little recap of all we’ve gotten into:

In August, we explored the topic of Music and Art expressions. Within that topic, the Grasshoppers learned about different genres of music, artists, and creative ways to express themselves through both art and music. They also enjoyed carrying out their Thursday water days.

During the month of September, we welcomed the celebrations and the start of some of our friends turning the "BIG 3" years old! We also learned all about Florida in September. The GHops really enjoyed learning about Florida waters: beaches, lakes, springs and rivers etc., the Florida agriculture, crops, animals, and the many kinds of sports that Florida has to offer. These sports included: football, basketball, baseball, golf, and Nascar to name a few. Although we know just how much Ms. Febi loves her Bulldogs (bleh!), Ms. Bre made sure we highlighted on our FLORIDA GATORS! (Because we’re the BEST! Haha!)

In October, we welcomed Ms. Jessica to our group. She has been an absolute wonderful addition to our class and we love her very much! October’s theme was Down on the Farm. Here, our GHops learned all about farmers, farming, crops, and farm animals. At the end of the month, we had our Fall Harvest Festival and dressed up in our costumes. It was a complete success and we had a blast!

November is a month that we focused on being kind, using our manners, and making nice gestures to those around us. We also focused on being thankful for many people and things in our lives. We celebrated together as a class with a Thanksgiving Feast and had a great turn out! The food was AMAZING and Mrs. B did a fabulous job in the kitchen! (Thanks, Mrs. B!)

It is absolutely amazing to see just how much our Grasshoppers have grown within the past few months! We couldn’t be any more excited to watch them grow and learn even more than they already have. We are so proud of their accomplishments already with potty training, as just about most of the class is now potty trained! (Woohoo!) Our GHops are also becoming very much independent as they are wanting to do things all by themselves. We can’t wait to see what the rest of 2015 and what 2016 has to offer!

Thank you so much for all your continued love and support with our Grasshopper class! Because of you, GHOPS ROCK!

Much love,

Ms. Febi, Ms. Bre & Ms. Jessica
What a busy few months we’ve had full of growing, learning, and changes! We said goodbye to Ms. Passion and Ms. Sherrie while welcoming Ms. Imelda and Ms. Stephanie. Some of our favorite activities have been the awesome field trips we’ve gone on. In September we visited Ben Hill Griffin Stadium where we were surprised with an appearance by Albert and Alberta! During October we went to Publix to buy pumpkins, Norman Hall for trick-or-treating, and enjoyed our super fun Fall Festival. The rest of the year is sure to bring a lot more fun and learning.

The Fireflies are continuing their social and emotional development through the Second Step program. We are also working on number and letter recognition through developmentally-appropriate activities such as letter tracing or name writing, discussing the letter-of-the-week, and counting. Fine motor (cutting with scissors, for instance) and gross motor (jumping with two feet) are also practiced regularly.

We wish all of our Baby Gator friends and families joyous holiday season and a wonderful 2016!
Hello from the Dragonflies! We have been having a great time in our classroom these past few months. A new part to our curriculum we have all been enjoying is Second Step. This program is all about developing and enhancing positive social and emotional development. With the use of puppets, songs, and interactions the children are learning to be more empathetic problem solvers. We talk a lot about how we are feeling, why we are feeling that way, and how we can help ourselves or help others. We have definitely seen some great improvements in our classroom since implementing Second Step. To help the children better understand and process their emotions we often ask how they are feeling and why.

“I’m not sad when I go to the zoo with Dad.” –Scott

“Sea dragons make me angry.” –Eli

“When Daddy plays with me I’m happy.” –Keely

“Mommy, Daddy, and Grandma make me happy.” –Abby

“Angry when my house broke.” –Kanon

“I’m sad not with my mommy and daddy.” –Jessica

“Mom makes me happy.” –Teresa

“I’m so scared when I sleep.” -Minji

“I’m alone in the dark because I’m scared…Funny muchaches scare me.” -Bailey

“Mad when people take Thomas.” –Gyuhwan

“My mommy and daddy, they make me happy.” –Jack

“My mom and dad help me when I’m scared.” –Alida

“Sometimes I feel scared.” –Mariam

“A sad song makes me feel sad.” –Minh-Thu

“My mommy and daddy make me feel happy.” –John

“When my mommy and daddy pick me up from school that makes me feel happy…I feel sad when my friend takes my toy from me.” –Mackenzie

“I feel happy and I dance! I cry when someone hits me.” –Raphael

“My grandma makes me feel happy…I get angry when I want the excavator or dump truck and no one will give it to me.” –Ben

Our days in the Dragonflies class are filled with lots of play, learning, and creativity. We have recently enjoyed successful field trips to watch the UF marching band practice, Ben Hill Griffin Stadium where we were surprised with a visit from Albert and Alberta, Publix for buying pumpkins, and trick-or-treating at Norman Hall. We also had some big events like our Kidchella Festival, Fall Festival, and Thanksgiving Feast. A big thank you to all of our parents and families who support our classroom and lend a hand (whether with your time, supplies, etc.) when you are able. You are truly appreciated!

Peace Love Dragonflies

Ms. Jen & Ms. Cathy
At the UF Football Stadium, the kids explored the President’s Box, sat in the stadium chairs, went down to the field, visited the Heisman statues, and saw the Gator trophy room. We took a bus to Trader Joe’s and saw their fall decorations, learned about each section of the store, saw the loading dock and even went into their huge freezer and refrigerator! We showed off our costumes at The Reitz Union and did a great job gathering candy. Our last field trip was to Percy Beard Track for the “Future Gators Track and Field Day.” We chose 3 events to do and had an absolute blast. A big THANK YOU to all the parents who helped make these trips possible!

Our Florida unit covered animals, fruit, and our very own UF! We learned about the American flag and what our veterans do (and how to march)! Numbers, counting to 100, adding + subtracting, letters, letter sounds, patterns, and shapes – WOW!

Kitchen play, dramatic play, emotional free play, nature walks, new playground toys, exploring nearby campus.
The Butterflies have had a great summer and fall. We've enjoyed taking a tour of the stadium, pumpkin picking at the Fresh Market, feeding Mrs. Pam’s goat, attending our Annual Fall Festival, and trick-or-treating through the Reitz.

The Butterflies have so much to be thankful for and we would like to share some of our gratitude with you.

I am thankful for …

Sam - "my brother"
Anushika - "when my dad gives me a new dog and cat - I feel so excited!"
Donovan – “for my toys”
Tanuka - "when my birthday comes and I get lots of lovely presents"

Austin - "for when my dog licks me"
Khloe - "Miami!"
Odelia - "when I ride ponies because mom lets me and I'm thankful for my letting me go to horse lessons"
Fiona - "my cousins Finny and Wyatt"
Jazz - "my mommy and daddy!"
Knox - "when I do soccer and basketball"
Aseel- "when I go to the store and help mommy buy food"
Angel - "my mommy and daddy"
Nyla - "my mom got a new car"
Yousef - "I'm happy like going to the movies"
Ethan - "when I got General Grievous with four lightsabers"
Emma - "I like when people have cupcakes and cookies"
Tavya - "when my Nanu gives me piggyback rides"
Albandari - "when I make a happy face for mommy and daddy"
Nathan - "mommy and daddy"
Ben - "when my mommy and daddy take me for bike rides"

There you have it. We give thanks to all and hope you have a warm holiday season!
As you may know, Lake Alice has a new Assistant Director (AD). Some of you may remember her as Ms. Lorenz, but Mrs. Nika Douglas has made quite an impact in the few short months that she’s been AD. But what do we know about Nika? What about the person behind the boss? I sat down with our AD and got the scoop on her life before becoming AD and what she is up to now.

Nika has been with Baby Gator since May of 2009 in a myriad of roles. She’s been a teacher for the two-year old, three year-old, and VPK classrooms, as well as the PHIT Kids Instructor, Summer Camp Counselor, and Special Events Coordinator. Nika decided to apply for the position of Assistant Director because she enjoyed working with kids, staff, and family individually, but wanted to work with them altogether at once for the betterment and growth of not only the children, but Baby Gator as a whole.

Nika has made a lot of changes since she’s been AD. The Lake Alice staff reports that they are happy with her involved style and how connected she is with the children. She knows the children by name and monitors their growth and development. The staff also appreciates her organization and communication skills which help them navigate the tasks and responsibilities they face.

On a personal level, Nika is a recent newlywed. She married her husband, Jeremy, in July of 2015. A lot of people are surprised to find out that Mrs. Nika is a vegetarian. She enjoys chocolate chip cookies and hard-boiled eggs. For her leisure time, Mrs. Nika enjoys paddle boarding, biking, and running, and enjoys being active and outdoors.

Nika seems to be the missing piece of the puzzle that Lake Alice has needed. She brings a lot of experience, ideas, and innovation to the role. If you have not met her yet, stop by the Lake Alice office and give her a big hello!
Hello from the Rainbowfish classroom!!! Ms. Lisa and Ms. Becky have been very busy the past few months getting to know all of our babies and helping them to grow. We said goodbye to some of our babies who have moved up to the Angelfish classroom, and we welcomed three new children that moved up from the Sunfish class. It has been a wonderful experience and challenge learning all about our new friends and their likes and dislikes.

In the month of August we learned to express ourselves through art. We learned about nutrition and exercise. We made sensory bottles filled with different hygiene products to explore with, did baby yoga, and even got to get a baby massage. We learned about different animal sounds and tried to copy the noises while listening to an animal sounds CD. We also got to learn about our different body parts which included our eyes, nose, mouth and hands.

September was all about Our Florida. We got to learn about our Florida oceans, where we got to explore and play with water and sand, made alligators while singing the Gator Chomp song, and we also went on a stroller ride around the campus to explore the different textures and colors of fall.

The month of October was the busiest month. Our theme was Down on the Farm, but we also had our Fall Festival. We did a lot of sensory activities, such as learning how to milk a cow with the udders made form a paint filled glove. We made pumpkins using actual pumpkin seeds, and made thankful trees using our handprints and finger tips. During the fall festival, everyone dressed in their costumes and got to explore with all of the activities that were set up outside on our playground. The babies’ favorite activity was getting to explore with real pumpkins and fall leaves.

The Rainbowfish classroom continues to develop and grow more and more each day, and we can’t wait to see what the winter plans will bring.

With love,

Ms. Becky and Ms. Lisa
We have been busy in the Sunfish classroom learning about fall. In September, we learned about Florida fruits and vegetables during our theme “Our Florida”. We made mobiles using pictures of Florida fruits and vegetables.

In October we went “Down on the Farm” and used pictures to observe ducks, horses, cows, and pigs. We then created them using paint and our fingers and toes to complete our class bulletin board.

In our unit, “We Give Thanks for Fall during November, Harper painted her pumpkin for our fall bulletin board. We also finger painted fall leaves to add to our class bulletin board. We looked at pictures of different colored fall leaves then made them into mobiles so we could enjoy them longer! We touched real apples to see how they felt! We had many parents come to the Fall Festival and accompany their children. We had fun at the bubble station. We really love bubbles! It was a great time had by all!

In December, we are learning about different kinds of trees, snow things, and snowmen. We will be reading “Snowmen at Night” and then make snowmen using cotton balls.
Hello parents of the Angelfish classroom. Over the past few months the children have transformed before our eyes. They went from non-mobile infants to mobile toddlers. When you enter our classroom you will notice that every toddler is busy either crawling or walking around exploring their environment. The toddlers of Angelfish are growing into their own independence.

In the month of August we learned about nutrition and exercise. We spent time teaching the children all about hygiene and did many exciting related activities. The children loved brushing their teeth and washing their hands. We incorporated our baby dolls into the activities and the children practiced cleaning their dolls. This was a big hit.

September was another exciting month. We learned about the state of Florida. The children colored pictures of alligators and we learned all about the game of football. The children really enjoyed exploring the football that we brought into class and wearing their gator gear to school on Fridays.

October was very eventful! We learned all about farm animals and practiced mastering their different sounds. We read the book The Farm Concert daily and it quickly became the children’s favorite. The end of the month was filled with making silly faced pumpkins, going on adventurous stroller walks and celebrating fall at the fall festival.

November was a month full of giving thanks. Here you see the children sitting doing their Thanksgiving project for their parents. Our children absolutely love creating art work. They enjoy exploring with different art mediums such as paints, crayons and markers. And especially light up for the camera. Art is one of the many wonderful ways we foster exploration and learning in our classroom.
For this fall, the Starfish classroom spent time doing activities that focused on sensory and nature themes.

In the theme “Our Florida”, the Starfish class focused on different types of Florida leaves that we collected outside as well as the sun, wildlife, and vegetation. The starfish enjoyed learning about oranges and got to experience how to make orange juice in the sensory table. We also learned about alligators and sang songs and played with our alligator stuffed animal.

For “Down On the Farm” the children learned about different farm animals and the grains they eat and about vegetables grown on farms. The Starfish class also learned about milking cows with gloves and water in the sensory table.

For “We Give Thanks for Fall” topics included fall weather, leaves changing, foods that we eat, and turkey activities. The children loved learning about turkeys and reading the story “Ten Fat Turkeys”.

For the theme “Celebrating Holidays Around the World” the Starfish will focus on the winter season, different countries, and different holiday traditions. The children will be able to travel around the world through the activities and stories we will read. The children loved learning about Italy and our spaghetti activity.

For the fall festival the Starfish made a jack o’ lantern toss, a duck pond, and felt piece pumpkin faces. Children had fun playing in their costumes and winning the prizes brought by our wonderful parents. Currently our class is learning about turkeys and foods we eat during this time of year.
The seahorses are doing amazing!
It's such a joy to watch the children as they grow and learn with each new day. Over the past few months we have noticed the children are communicating more with us through sign language as well as with their words. We love seeing their development on track and enjoy helping with new sensory experiences! We are also noticing the development of more fine and gross motor skills.
The children had a great time at the fall festival. They really enjoyed exploring all the different activities that were going on that day, as well as all the fun characters walking around. We also did a class activity in October during our outside time. The children gathered outside items (leaves, sticks, etc.) and glued the items on paper to create a bird’s nest. We all had a great time with this activity.
We are looking forward to what the next few months brings as the children learn and grow.

Thank you, Ms. Tammy and Ms. Rene in the Seahorses class
The Sea Lions are doing wonderfully! The children are enjoying learning new words in English and Spanish. The children are also learning more American Sign Language to express their basic needs. They enjoy painting and dancing in class. They love to explore outside and finding different sticks, leaves, and plants. They’re enjoying baby doll circle time. The children enjoy singing and taking care of their babies with love. We’re very proud of their growth and we love watching them grown and learn everyday!

In September, we talked about Our Florida. The topics we discussed were orange trees, alligators, and Florida marine animals. One activity the children enjoyed was feeding the shark. The teachers cut out a cardboard shark and fish. The children searched for the fish over the classroom and feed it to the shark. We talked about what sharks like to eat, the different colors of the fish, and where sharks live.

October was Down on the Farm. The children learned about different farm animals, the sounds of the animals, and different fruits and vegetables that grows on a farm. Two activities the children enjoyed were Sticky Sheep and painting with vegetables. With Sticky Sheep, the teachers drew a sheep on contact paper. The children used cotton balls and pom poms to make the sheep's wool. Painting with vegetables, we talked about each vegetable that grows on a farm. We let the children use the vegetables to paint.

We Give Thanks for Fall was the theme for November. The children learned about turkeys, foods you eat for thanksgiving, and fall leaves. One activity the children enjoyed was decorating pine cones. The children rolled the pine cones in the paint and decorated it with leaves and pom poms.

In December, we are learning about Celebrating winter around the world. We are currently talking about winter clothing, snowmen, Christmas trees, Kwanzaa, and Hanukah. In PHIT Kids the children learned about hockey. They enjoyed playing in the ice sensory table.

Happy Holidays,

Ms. Tina and Ms. Cyarah
Greetings Baby Gator family and friends, and welcome to the deep blue sea. The Blue Marlins have been super busy this fall and are excited to share our adventures, so sit back and enjoy the waves.

“Sea What the Blue Marlins are Up To”

The Blue Marlins used their eyes to find letters in books, ears to hear animal sounds, nose to smell Kool-Aid, tongues to taste limes and hands to explore a beach sensory bin filled with rice, and shells during our week of “The Five Senses”.

“Sea What the Blue Marlins are Cooking”

The Blues Marlins put their listening skills to the test by following a recipe to make yummy mud cups.

**Mud Cup Recipe:**

- 2 bags of gummy worms
- 1 cup of pudding
- 1 cup of milk
- 1 pack of Oreo cookies
- 2 packs of whipped topping

“Sea What the Blue Marlins are Planning”

The Blue Marlins had an awesome time bobbing for doughnuts, dressing up, trick or treating and participating in fun-filled activities during our Fall Festival.
Hello To All From The Sea Turtles:

First of all I would like to welcome all of my new students and their parents to our Sea Turtles Family. Please feel free at any time to contact me for any concern or just to talk I’m always here for you and your child.

Dear Parents:
Thank you so much for all the supply items we ask for. You all go above and beyond the call of duty and for that I’m forever grateful. Because of your generosity I am able to provide your children with some AWESOME learning experiences. You’re the BEST!!

Our Recipe for Applesauce:

Yazan – You need some apples maybe 10. Cook for 7 days and then eat. Yum!
Chloe – I like apples they are so good. I like to cook them but eat them when cold. I think you need to cook them for 10 days then you can eat them.
Norah – You put water on the apples then cut them.
Sarthak- Cheryl, you need apples and water and cut them eat them.
Eric – I think we need some apples like 20 and cut them and put them in a pot and cook for like 100 days.
Joe – Applesauce we need apples put on the table cut and throw the seeds in garbage. Then eat them. No cook them.
Rishi – Applesauce is good. I like it. I think you need apples maybe water and cook them for 1 day and then maybe put in the refrigerator to get cold.
Yi – Apples good

Alyssa- When we make applesauce we need lots of apples like 25 and cook them and then we can eat them. But I don’t like them.

Reminder:
We need a change of clothes in our cubby at all times!!

Thank You from Ms. Cheryl and the Sea Turtles
The Sea Dragons wish you all a happy fall!

From picnics to bike races to mummification and more! We even went to the museum to explore!

The Sea Dragons have gone to Norman Hall to chalk on the ground, practiced our manners while passing paint to each other, sang silly songs about grizzly bears and have even played in the mud! (Don’t worry parents, it was soap and paint). It has been a time of learning about one another and loving new friends. We’ll leave you with our lunch song to give you an idea of how we feel about each other: “We love our bread, we love our butter, but most of all, we love each other!”

Love,

- Leafy Sea Dragons & Ms. Stacy
In the month of September the Whales class celebrated “Our Florida” and explored the things that our wonderful state has to offer, from agriculture to football to wildlife. The Whale’s class learned about different animals and their habitats, plant life, and agriculture, included Florida citrus. We explored the local lakes and springs that Florida has to offer and then investigated the beaches of Florida. Families can visit The Florida Museum of Natural History, here is Gainesville to learn about Florida’s rich background. You might explore some of the lakes here in the city to find some wildlife yourself!

In the month of October we celebrated the tradition of being “Down on the Farm” during the beginning of the harvest season. The Whales class learned that apples, pumpkins, corn, milk, eggs and much, more come from farms. We explored tractors and farm equipment. The children played sound games and could recognize the sound of the tractor. We investigated how and why the seasons change and how food grows through different seasons. Our class walked to the gardens around Baby Gator to explore and learn more about plants.

Then came fall festival at Baby Gator and the Whales and their other peers celebrated fall fun games and activities. “We Gave Thanks for Fall” by taking the kids trick-or-treating in the children’s hospital. “We Give Thanks for Fall,” is part of the theme that also incorporates with the Thanksgiving holiday. Fall festival was so much fun with games, treats, costumes, bubbles, and so much more. Our wonderful parents’ contribution to the decorations and fun stuff for fall festival is greatly appreciated. We all had a great time. Last but not the least, the whales are so thankful to Ms. Alli, an intern, who worked alongside us in our classroom with so much enthusiasm and energy. We appreciate all her passion and love for the kids. Whales wish her all the best in her endeavors and will miss her. Thank you Ms. Alli!
The Manta Rays are having process art! This week children were learning about the history of the Native Americans and Pilgrims. With different materials such as feathers, beads, and paint provided by the teachers, children decorated their Native American necklace.

Children shown here working on their fine motor skills using feathers as a paint brush to decorate their vest. In this activity the Manta Rays were learning about what the Native Americans outfit looked like.

During the month of November the Manta Rays talked about being grateful, being kind, gentle, and how to use good manners. In this picture children are decorating their turkey made of Rice Krispies for our Thanksgiving lunch.
Hello from the Dolphins! The children have had a lovely fall and are looking forward to the holiday season. We spent our autumn cooking delicious treats like apple crumbles and pumpkin shaped rice cereal treats, exploring inside and decorating outside pumpkins, and reading books about Halloween (Counting Pumpkins was our favorite, we always liked to find the cat on each page,). We made a trip to the Florida Museum of Natural History where we saw dinosaur bones, shark jaws and butterflies. The children were fascinated with the mammoth fossil, and we made several trips back to see it. During Our Florida month, we focused on Gainesville and all our favorite things about it. We made Hyppo ice pops, watched Paynes Prairie sunsets, decorated the signs from Bo Diddly Plaza, and put on a play like we were at the Hippodrome. November was full of thanks for our friends and families. We cheered for the Gators, spooked our buddies, traveled about campus and wildly expanded our vocabulary!

By: Ms. Angie & Ms. Cristina
Fall has been a fun time in the Blue Jay classroom. We took the bus to Lake Alice twice. We saw an alligator and turtles in the lake and had a nice long walk in the woods. We also toured the gardens and heard the bats making squeaky noises in the bat house. We were surprised they were awake in the daytime because we read that bats are nocturnal.

While learning about farms, we milked a cow and sheared a sheep. We also made a worm farm. After reading *Blueberries for Sal* we preserved some blueberries by canning some and freezing some. We will taste them in January of next year. The blueberries that we did not preserve smell rotten and have mold on them, so we won’t eat them. It is important to preserve foods properly so you can eat them even when they are not growing because it is winter. There is a bear hibernating in the Blue Jay classroom. The bear has not eaten or played or moved for several weeks and is expected to wake up very hungry in the spring. His heart beats and then 45 seconds later it beats and then 45 seconds later it beats again, which is a very slow heart rate, and we had fun counting to 45.

Recently we went on a nature walk and collected acorns, leaves, pinecones and sticks, and later made a graph using the collection. We used the things we collected from nature to conduct a sink or float experiment. We also did an experiment on why the leaves change colors. The children learned that during the fall, the chlorophyll that makes the leaves green goes away and allows the colors that are under the leaves to shine through. The children got to watch this process. A couple of our leaves turned yellow but most of them remained green.

To finish our lesson on fall and begin our week on Thanksgiving activities, we made a GIVE THANKS sign using the things we collected from nature. We are looking forward to more fun during the holidays, winter and next year too.
We asked the Cardinals what their favorite activities were so far this year:

Maximus- "When we went to the museum and saw some butterflies on the wall. OH! And we went on the bus!"

Casyn- "I liked the rubber ducky races. They went so slow, and then we squirted them, and then they went fast."

Ben- "My favorite activity was drawing turkeys with the markers. I liked when it looked like Spongebob."

Jason- "Dinosaaauurs!!!!

Jaydon- "My favorite thing was when I play with the blocks on the carpet. I like building the house!"

Raya- "My favorite activity was when we decorated the seasons on the wall. I liked summer the best! And also playing outside."

Anay- "When we made the feather turkey wings! And we put them on Sheldon (our class turkey). And we went to the big house building with all the plants inside! (greenhouse)."

Emma- "We made the turkeys and we gave them wings. But we didn't use the feathers we used candy corn!"

Giuliano- "When we saw the dinosaurs!! I loved my dinosaur hat, it accidentally ripped, but it was okay because the dinosaur got to see it still."

Andrew- "I like music time!!"

Kylie- "I really liked when I made the beach and we put the shells and the sand on. I put a blue shark on top!"

Nivedh- "When I was Iron Man for the Fall festival."

Meera- "When we put the dinosaurs in the ice and got them out. It was really cool."
We started the new VPK year at our new house, “Diamond Village”, and with a new name: “Owls”. The children adapted quickly and successfully to all changes. The first month we learned about nutrition, health and safety.

September came and we had a new theme “Our Florida” and the children had the opportunities to focus on everything that our State offers like Florida Crops, Beaches and Gators.

Also children celebrated the 50 years of Gatorade creating a new formula.

We planted seeds, took nature walks and talked about the changing seasons. The Owls especially enjoyed outdoor art time.

Our adventure was a field trip to The Florida Museum of Natural History.

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

November was all about leaves, harvests, turkeys and giving thanks. We also celebrated the fall during our Thanksgiving Feast.

Mrs. Yecenia
Come Along With The Sparrows and **Ms. Quanda And Mr. Todd** On Their STEM Explorations

**Technology Take-Apart (Self-Directed)**

Students in the Diamond Village Sparrows Class are engaging in STEM by taking apart a radio with screwdrivers while further developing their social/emotional and team building skills.

**Technology Take-Apart Group Picture**

Here, we were able to capture a group photo during our technology take-apart STEM activity. Students in the Sparrows class were working as a team taking apart televisions, radios, and DVD players with hand tools. Judging by their expressions, I believe they were having a great time while learning!!

**Road Construction Activity (Self-Directed)**

In this photo, the students created a neighborhood road system by cutting strips of construction paper into different road shapes. During the activity, students also created road signs from Popsicle sticks, Legos, and construction paper. What a great engineering and team building activity!!
We’ve been having so much fun in the Robins! I’ve been having a great time getting to know all the wonderful children in this class. I started with the Robins in August and one of our first adventures was a field trip to the Shands Cair Helipad. The kids had a great time getting an up-close look at the helicopter and the EMTs even let them get inside the ambulance and look around.

Next, we joined the Blue Jays for a field trip to Lake Alice. At the lake, we searched for local wildlife in their natural habitat. The kids had a great time watching the turtles that swam right up to the edge of the water.

Finally, we traveled to Lake Alice once again. This time, we toured the UF Student Agricultural Gardens and looked at all the different plants growing there. We even saw bananas ripening on the tree! How cool! At the end of October, we joined with the rest of Diamond Village in celebrating our Fall Festival with lots of great costumes and fun activities.

It has been great getting to know the wonderful children in the Robins classroom. We’ve had some great times together and I look forward to many more.

Ms. Liz
Developing healthy living habits early in a child’s life provides them with a strong foundation for a healthy life in their future. The goal of the PHIT Kids program is to do just that. Through nutrition education, physical education, motor development, and health and safety education our children will learn how to keep their bodies healthy and well. All of the children at Baby Gator get scheduled PHIT Kids time each week. For our infants and toddlers we will work on various motor development skills, recognition of healthy foods and images, and exposure to new physical activities. Our older gators will have a health education component each week where we will learn how to be healthy and fit.

In September we started the morning mile with the 3 and 4 year old classrooms. Three to five days a week the GG and VPK children run or walk for 15 minutes to get their neurons firing! Ask your children about their morning mile necklace and how many laps they have run so far.

Lessons:

September’s Phitkids lessons were devoted to eating healthy fruits from Florida, staying safe at the beach, springs, and river, exercising like an astronaut, and pretending to be Nascar drivers. Activities included practicing how to stop and go, agility training with cones, core exercises, and hand/eye coordination.

October was all about fall down on the farm! We learned about dairy foods, parts of an apple, and how to dress for the weather. We pretended like we were farmers and practiced upper body strength moves, similar to what a farmer might do working on the farm.

In November we learned more about eating healthy. We studied the protein group and grains. We did experiments while learning about our sense of smell and all of the wonderful aromas of the season.

We will wrap up year with some winter activities for December. December will be all about snow and ice, the Winter Olympics and hockey.

Family Events:

In September many families joined us for Play Date at the Park at Possum Creek Park. The weather was perfect. In October we had our annual Field Day event. It was almost rained out, but dried up just in time to have a great event.

News Flash:

Baby Gator will have a Phitkids intern starting in January. She will be designing lesson plans and will travel to all 3 centers to share her knowledge of recreational exercise!
The fall was a busy and tuneful time in our music classes at Baby Gator from the Tiny Gators up through VPK. We welcomed “old” friends back to school and welcomed many new students to come learn and sing with us. In September we sang about Florida activities, creatures, and places. LG-1 and LG-2 enjoyed listening Ms. Anne sing books and stories about going to the beach including Beach Day by Douglas Florian. Grasshoppers and Growing Gators and the VPK classes had fun and built listening skills as they participated in musical movement games based on the books Sheep on a Ship by Nancy Shaw and Frog in a Bog by Karma Wilson.

October is always a great month with our “Down on the Farm” theme, not to mention the Fall Festival! LG-1 and LG-2 moved and grooved with rhythm instruments as they listened to “A Place on the Farm” sung by Jack Hartmann. The Grasshoppers, Blue Marlins and Growing Gators learned many seasonal songs including “Jack-o-Lantern” and “I’m a Little Scarecrow” along with American Sign Language to help tell the story. One of their favorite stories was The Spooky Wheels on the Bus by J. Elizabeth Mills. Our VPK children enjoyed listening to a musical version of There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Bat by Lucille Colandro as well as some fun echo-type songs to build memory skills and promote cooperation.

In November was talked about being thankful as well as helping others. Some of our youngest singer in LG-1 had a great time pretending to be squirrels as they learned the “Gray Squirrel” and “The Acorn” songs. LG-2 loved Nuts to You by Lois Ehlert as well as the “5 Little Squirrels” flannel board story and song. In nearly every class children got to participate in a rhythm instrument play along activity. Ms. Anne will put a lively instrumental CD on to play, we get out the “shaky eggs”, and move along to the beat! A much loved book for Grasshoppers, Blue Marlins and other Growing Gators was Hibernation Station by Michelle Meadows sung to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star”. Imagine all the forest animals boarding a train made of hollow logs to sleep for the winter! The VPK’ers enjoyed learning about hibernation by singing “Hurry, Hurry” about woodland animals preparations for winter.

Now that December is here rehearsals for our winter holiday sing along programs are in full swing. Classes from LG-2 through VPK are busy preparing holiday songs from around the world to sing for their families and friends later this month. They are also relishing books set to music such as Let it Snow by Marian CoCa-Leffler and The First Day of Winter by Denise Fleming. There will be flannel board stories, puppets, and so much more to bring music to life for our children and hopefully into your homes for the holidays and for a long time to come.

Happy Musical Holidays!

Mrs. Anne Roberts
Our annual food drive for Bread of the Mighty Food Bank was another huge success!

This year between all 3 centers we raised 602 pounds of goods. With this amount of food, Bread of the Mighty was able to provide 463 meals! This makes a huge difference in the lives of some families and we have our Baby Gator families to thank. Without your generosity this would not have been possible.

The children enjoyed shopping for items, bringing in bags of food and decorating boxes. They also learned about giving to others, our community helpers and acts of kindness. They were more than eager to push all of the boxes down the hall and load the food into the truck.

Thank you to all the parents, teachers and children for making this event successful!

By: Robin Stabel
Office Manager, Lake Alice

Kristie McCloud
Teacher, Orange Blossoms
If you know a family interested in enrolling their child in Baby Gator, have them contact Ms. Ethel Rocha (pictured here) for pricing and availability!

Editor E-mail: najamk@ufl.edu