



All Children Considered

SPRING 2009

A NEWSLETTER FOR PEOPLE WHO CARE FOR CHILDREN

GO GREEN THIS SPRING

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No Child Left Inside

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Last year at the finale of the "Great Park Pursuit", a child was overheard commenting on the fact that it had been seven weeks since he last played a video game. Those of us who were listening smiled at hearing those odd yet sweet words. You see, for us, our mission had been accomplished: another child had not been left inside; another child had discovered the thrill of finding a sense of place and wonder in this ecosystem we call Earth.

Today's children have become disconnected from nature – or more prophetically as author Richard Louv writes – are suffering from "nature deficit disorder." Instead of spending endless hours outside riding bikes

and climbing trees (i.e., being kids) they are playing video games, surfing the web, watching TV, and texting.

So how do you as caregivers go about reversing this trend? How do we lure children away from the glow of the TV and attract them instead to the glow of a firefly? How do we create the next generation of environmental stewards that will outlive their parents?

With these questions in mind, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, along with Governor M. Jodi Rell, in 2005 launched the No Child Left Inside initiative. This program is a promise to introduce children to the wonder of nature – for their own health and well-being, for the future of environmental conservation, and for the preservation of the beauty, character, and communities of the great State of Connecticut.

(Continued on next page)

From the editor...

The theme "Go Green This Spring" recognizes that caring for our environment is a critical personal attribute for our children to develop. Articles in this issue help you teach young children about the environment, involve them in gardening activities, and encourage their families to participate in Connecticut's state parks and forests. An article from the CT Resources Recovery Authority provides information on field trips to learn first hand about recycling in our state. The Department of Public Health update section includes two articles to help you keep your child care facility clean and "green."

In addition to the regular "2-1-1 Child Care Mailbag" and "Caregivers Resource Corner" features, we have included a "Readers' Survey" for you to give us feedback on our publication. As a special THANK YOU for surveys completed and returned by May 15th, 2009, we will randomly select fifteen respondents to receive a "FUNDANA" biodiversity game. Your comments are very important to us as we look forward to meeting your continuing need for child care information.

We hope you will find this issue helpful as you "Go Green" this spring!

Harry Mangle
Editor



A key component of the No Child Left Inside initiative is the “Great Park Pursuit: CT State Parks Family Adventure”. Over the past three years, 1,000 families from across the state have decoded clues to discover the exciting opportunities available at Connecticut State Parks and Forests – all while having fun! Activities include hiking, letterboxing, canoeing, camping, and so much more!

This spring, as you consider all of the ways to “Go Green,” why not participate in the “Great Park Pursuit” to be held May 9 - June 20, 2009. Not only will you be outside enjoying the greenery of our 138 state parks and forests, but also you will be helping to raise the next generation of environmental stewards: something I know that is near to your heart. Everyone is welcome to participate in the Great Park Pursuit. However, only registered families will be eligible for grand prizes by visiting www.nochildleftinside.org and selecting “Play the Game.”

I look forward to seeing you all out there!



The No Child Left Inside Pledge

I pledge to defend the right of all children and every family to play in a safe outdoor environment. I will encourage and support opportunities for them to exercise their rights.



Children and Gardening

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If you ask gardeners why they enjoy working in their gardens, you are likely to get many different answers. Whatever the response, the fact remains that gardening is often perceived as time well spent with the surrounding world.

The same can be said for children. As someone who has worked with young people for almost 20 years, I have had many opportunities to see the joy when a young person sees the work of their own hands. Whether it's smelling a newly planted flower or picking green beans for the first time after patiently watching them blossom from seed, the look of pride in a child's eyes is always rewarding.

Why is gardening such a good activity for children?

First, a garden can be planted anywhere. All you need is a pot of dirt and a few seeds. A garden can be a small square of unused land in the yard or a flower box under a window. You can plant in paper cups or gallon milk jugs cut in half. Flowers can grow anywhere you have a few free inches of space. The size of the garden is not as important as what you decide to do with it. Ask the kids for ideas. Let their imaginations run wild.

Second, gardens are very hands-on and experiential. Kids love any activity where it is OK to get their hands dirty. Something exciting occurs when you put a shovel in the ground, creating a living canvas. Each child has an opportunity to leave a personal signature on the environment by their unique contribution. They learn to explore new ideas and try things to which they are not normally exposed. Through gardening, children become the masters of their own learning.

Third, gardening is a great teaching tool. Even if you know very little, a few hours on the internet is all you need to learn the basics of dirt composition and what grows well in your area. Your University of Connecticut local county extension center has Master Gardeners who are more than willing to answer your questions and help you get started. There are also many books on gardening that offer simple steps to help you begin the adventure. This is also an opportunity to teach science, math, and other skills needed to care for the growth of living things such as patience, caring, and dedication to name just a few.

As I think back to my own childhood and youth, the times that are most memorable to me are times when I had the opportunity to experience life firsthand. Gardening offers young people so many firsthand experiences they will remember for years to come. It will also give them the tools to understand and be better stewards of the natural world around them.

What Can I Teach Young Children About the Environment?

<http://www.kidsource.com/education/teach.environment.p.k12.3.html>

Because young children learn about the environment by interacting with it, educators and other adults must attend to the frequency, nature, and quality of child-environment interactions during the early years. Many young children have limited opportunities for these experiences. In fact, regardless of where they live, young children spend most of their time in settings or doing activities that keep them essentially isolated from the natural world.

Why Should My Child Learn About the Environment So Early?

The rationale for environmental education during the early childhood years is based on two major premises. First, children must develop a sense of respect and caring for the natural environment during their first few years of life or be at risk for never developing such attitudes. Second, positive interactions with the natural environment are an important part of healthy child development, and these interactions enhance learning and the quality of life over the span of one's lifetime.

How Can I Get Started?

Begin with simple experiences. Young children learn best through experiences that relate to what is already familiar and comfortable. Thus, the best place to start is in an environment similar to what they already know. For example, focus on a single tree in a backyard or playground before venturing into a heavily wooded area.

Provide frequent positive experiences outdoors.

Because children learn best through direct, concrete experiences, they need to be immersed in the outdoor environment to learn about it. Optimally, the

exposure should be provided on an almost daily basis. A one-time trip to a park or nature preserve will have very limited impact on young children.

In addition to investigating the elements of the natural world already present in an outdoor setting, you can use many different strategies to transform a typical playground into an environmental yard. Start by adding bird feeders, wind socks, flower and vegetable gardens, tree houses, rock piles, and logs.

Then, provide your child with tools for experimenting and investigating (for example, a magnifying glass, water hose and bucket, hoe, rake). Focus on "experiencing" rather than "teaching." Because young children learn through discovery and self-initiated activities, an adult should serve more as a facilitator than a teacher. Learning among young children requires active involvement -- hands-on manipulation, sensory engagement, and self-initiated explorations.

Your expressions of interest in and enjoyment of the natural world are critical to the child's interest in the environment. Care and respect can be modeled by gently handling plants and animals in the classroom, establishing or maintaining outdoor habitats for wildlife, properly disposing of trash, and recycling or reusing as many materials as possible.

If children are to develop a sense of connectedness with the natural world, they need frequent positive experiences with the outdoors. Providing opportunities for such experiences and sharing them with young children is the essence of environmental education. Environmental education for the early years focuses primarily on young children exploring and enjoying the world of nature under the guidance and with the companionship of caring adults.

Excerpted from 1996 ERIC Digest, Starting Early: Environmental Education During the Early Childhood Years, written by Ruth A. Wilson for the ERIC Clearinghouse for Science, Mathematics, and Environmental Education. This brochure is in the public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted.

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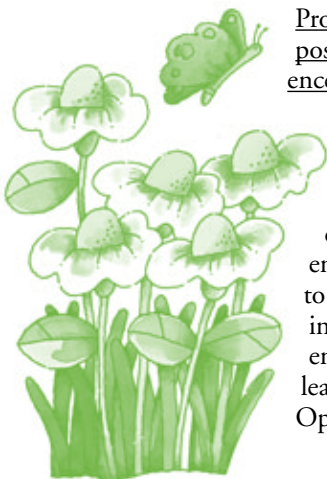
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Go Green with the Three R's - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

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Before being “green” was fashionable, the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority’s Trash Museum and Garbage Museum (http://www.crra.org/pages/edu_museums.htm) were at the forefront of educating the public about the importance of the three R’s – reduce, reuse, and recycle. For nearly 15 years, children and adults have participated in environmental programs at these unique educational facilities. Visitors may view exhibits made from trash and participate in hands-on and interactive educational programs.

During a trip to the Trash Museum, located at 211 Murphy Road in Hartford, visitors can stroll through the “Temple of Trash,” an exhibit depicting an old dump filled with reclaimed trash that could have been salvaged, re-used, or recycled. Children and adults learn how trash was managed over 20 years ago and how important recycling truly is. Individuals may participate in scavenger hunts searching for “found” items throughout this signature exhibit. Upstairs in the mezzanine area, the public can watch the recycling processing center from a viewing window and with the help of nine closed-circuit television cameras that allow visitors to see the recycling action up-close.

The Garbage Museum, located at 1410 HoneySpot Road Extension in Stratford, features Trash-o-saurus, a one-ton dinosaur made from salvaged items. Interactive exhibits, recycled crafts, and movies are all activities the public may participate in at the Garbage Museum. Additionally,

families enjoy an all-time favorite activity, “Trash Bash,” or learn about composting techniques while walking through a worm tunnel. Upstairs on a walkway, the public can catch a bird’s-eye view of the recycling processing facility and trucks dumping their loads of recyclables.

For additional information about the Trash Museum, call 860.757.7765; or about the Garbage Museum, call 203.381.9571. For directions and hours for both museums, go to <http://www.crra.org> and click on “Education.” Facebook members can also become “fans” or “friends” of the Trash Museum and Garbage Museum.

The Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority (CRRA) is a quasi-public agency whose mission is to work for – and in – the best interests of the municipalities of the state of Connecticut. CRRA’s four solid waste projects serve 118 Connecticut cities and towns. Computer users can also discuss CRRA at its blog, <http://crra-blog.blogspot.com>.



Caregivers’ Resource Corner

Family Meal Times Protect Children and Teens

Children and teens that have dinner with their families six to seven times a week:

- are at half the risk for substance abuse compared with teens who dine with their families infrequently;
- are less likely to have friends or classmates who use illicit drugs or abuse prescription drugs;
- have lower levels of tension or stress at home;
- are more likely to say that their parents and families are proud of them;
- are more likely to say they can confide in their parents;
- are more likely to get better grades in school;
- are more likely to be emotionally content and have positive peer relationships;
- have more healthful eating habits;
- are at lower risk for thoughts of suicide.

Reference: 2002 Study of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University

Web Resources for Providers and Parents

Consumer Product Safety Recalls:

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsclist.aspx>

Important recall information for consumer products.

Pertinent Information for Providers:

<http://211childcare.org/>

Kids Health: <http://kidshealth.org/>

KidsHealth is the largest and most-visited site on the Web providing doctor-approved health information about children from before birth through adolescence. This award winning website provides families with accurate, up-to-date, and jargon-free health information they can use. The website has separate areas for kids, teens, and parents -- each with its own design, age-appropriate content, and tone, with thousands of in-depth features, articles, animations, games, and resources.

CT Children’s Trust Fund’s TAKE FIVE! for Positive Parenting

Overwhelmed by Parenting? In 2006, the State of Connecticut received more than 80,000 reports of child abuse and neglect,

each representing someone’s concern about a child’s well-being.

Studies show that childhood abuse and neglect have numerous negative effects on a person throughout his or her lifetime, including increased likelihood of running away and experiencing street victimization as a child, developmental delays, and higher incidence of mental healthy disabilities as adults.

To learn more about TAKE FIVE! (<http://www.take5parenting.com/>), or other programs and initiatives that provide family support and help prevent child abuse/neglect, call the Children’s Trust Fund at 860.418.8765 or e-mail at ctf@ct.gov.

Free Professional Development:

“Lead Poisoning: Limiting the Ability to Learn” teaches educators about lead poisoning and how to help children who have been lead poisoned. This two-hour training is for personnel working with children, 6 months through 17 years, in public schools, child day care centers, and family resource centers. If interested, contact: Harry.Mangle@uconn.edu or 203.980.4661



Cleaning the Green & Healthy Way

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What is “Green” cleaning?

“Green” cleaning uses safer cleaning chemicals as well as modern equipment and techniques. This type of cleaning releases fewer harmful particles and toxic substances into the environment, by use of the following “green”:

- Products (less toxic, third party certified green cleaners, paper products, and soaps);
- Practices (Use products properly, keep ventilation on when cleaning, and dust from the top down.); and
- Equipment (Use microfiber cloths to capture dust, multilevel walk-off mats to collect dirt at the door, and vacuum cleaners with HEPA filters.)

What are “Green” cleaning products?

“Green” cleaning products are products that have a less or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products that serve the same purpose. However, just because a product is advertised or labeled as “green” does not make it so. Look for a third-party certification label.



Green Seal and EcoLogo are the two most common labels. To obtain third party certification, manufacturers must submit the product to extensive testing by independent reviewers. The criteria used for certification includes:

- Health factors (does not cause

cancer, is not a skin sensitizer or respiratory irritant);

- Environmental properties (biodegradable, safe for aquatic organisms, recyclable); and
- Performance (must work as well as, or better than, traditional cleaning products that perform the same task).

What about antimicrobial products?

Antimicrobial cleaning products destroy or suppress the growth of harmful bacteria, viruses, and fungi on inanimate objects such as countertops and toilet seats. The most common products are divided into two categories:

- **Disinfectants** kill 99.99% of disease-producing microorganisms on objects or surfaces. However, all disinfectants do not kill all types of microbes and viruses. Read the label for proper use. Disinfectants require a clean surface before application and a minimum of ten minutes contact time to be effective.
- **Sanitizers** reduce by 99.95%, but do not necessarily eliminate, the number of microorganisms on objects or surfaces to levels considered safe by Public Health codes or regulations.

Guidelines for use of bleach as a sanitizing agent: “Two minutes of contact time with a coating of a sprayed 1:64 diluted solution of ¼ cup household liquid chlorine bleach in one gallon of tap water prepared fresh daily is an effective method of surface-sanitizing of environmental surfaces and other inanimate objects that have first been cleaned of organic soil.” (*Caring for our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards*, 2002, p.483)

What to use?

Read the label carefully before using any cleaning product! Consider the following to determine which product to choose:

- What is the right product for the job? Do I need a disinfectant, sanitizer, or just soap and water?

- How often does it need to be used? Do I use the product daily, weekly, or as needed?
- Where will it be used? Do I need it for the bathroom, kitchen, or play areas? Do not go overboard and use everywhere. Look at high-risk areas such as bathrooms, areas that need to be sanitized such as food areas and those that just need to be washed with soap and water. Identify “touch points” such as doorknobs where there might be a higher likelihood of germs. For food contact areas, EPA approved sanitizers must be used. The label must read: “For Food Contact Surfaces.”
- How does it need to be applied? Does the product need special equipment or application technique?

Important Notes:

- (1) For specific information pertaining to child day care licensing always refer to the CT Department of Public Health Group Day Care Homes and Day Care Center Regulations.
- (2) The use of disinfectants should be limited, since they contain very strong compounds that are designed to be toxic. Overuse leads to overexposure, which can cause a decrease in the ability of the body to fight infections and the development of disease resistant bacteria. Use the least toxic disinfectant. Bleach is most toxic; hydrogen peroxide-based products are the least toxic.

For more information on green cleaning and environmental health:

CT Department of Public Health:
www.ct.gov/dph

Inform, Inc.:
<http://www.informinc.org/>

Environmental Protection Agency:
www.epa.gov

Green Seal:
<http://www.greenseal.org>

EcoLogo:
<http://www.ecologo.org>



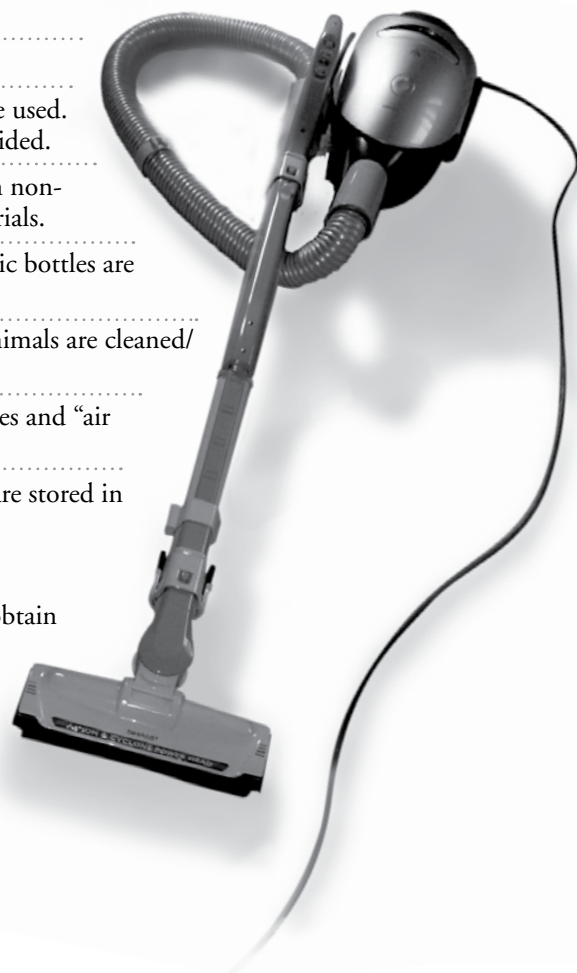
Is Your Day Care Facility Green & Healthy?

Reducing a child's exposure to toxins in the environment can have a huge impact on health and development. There are many things that can be done that will make a difference. Use the checklist below to find out if your facility is moving in the right direction.

Yes	No	Don't Know	Checklist Items
			Cars or other vehicles are not allowed to idle near the facility.
			Smoking is not permitted anywhere on the premises or in sight of children.
			Environmentally preferable third-party certified green cleaning products* and least-toxic disinfecting products are used.
			Areas are dusted, mopped, and vacuumed regularly to minimize dust.
			Only non-aerosol products are used.
			Walk-off mats are at all the entrances to our facility.
			Digital thermometers are used instead of mercury-containing thermometers.
			All used batteries, fluorescent and compact fluorescent light bulbs are securely stored and recycled.
			Rugs are vacuumed daily using a vacuum with a HEPA filter.
			Only non-toxic art supplies approved by the Art & Creative Materials Institute (ACMI) are used.
			Only glass or microwave safe ceramic dishes are used to heat food in the microwave.
			Garbage is covered at all times to avoid attracting pests and minimize odors.
			Non-toxic techniques are used both inside and outside the facility to prevent and control pests (insects and weeds).
			Adequate ventilation is maintained; there is no stale or musty smell.
			Water leaks are repaired promptly.
			Only lead-free and PVC-free toys are used. Toys made out of soft plastic are avoided.
			Playground equipment is made from non-pressure treated wood or other materials.
			All paper, cardboard, glass, and plastic bottles are recycled.
			Upholstered furniture and stuffed animals are cleaned/washed regularly.
			No scented products such as perfumes and "air fresheners" are used.
			Clutter is kept to a minimum; toys are stored in enclosed containers.

* Look for the label. Green Seal and Eco-Logo are the two most common. To obtain third party certification, manufacturers must submit the product to extensive testing by independent reviewers.

If you answered "YES" to all of these statements, you are on your way to having a green & healthy day care facility. Congratulations! Keep moving in this direction. If you answered "NO" to any of the statements, we suggest that you try to address them, if possible.



Complete our Survey and Win a Prize

Does this newsletter meet your need for information on topics related to child care? Please complete this "Readers Survey" online at <http://www.cag.uconn.edu/ces/acc/> or send by mail to Harry Mangle, Hartford County Extension Center, 1800 Asylum Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06117, or by fax (860.570.9008). Fifteen names will be drawn from all respondents who complete and postmark this survey BY MAY 15, 2009. Those winners will be contacted to choose a "FUNDANA" Biodiversity Game, in one of two available versions (for ages 3-6 or 7-12). To be eligible for the drawing, be sure to enter your contact information and age range of the prize selected.

Thank you for helping us improve our publication! *Editorial Board*

1. To what degree do you find *All Children Considered* helpful?

- a. Very helpful
- b. Average
- c. Not helpful
- d. No opinion

2. What topics would you like to read about in future issues of *All Children Considered*?

3. During the past three years, *All Children Considered* has been published two times a year. If publication continues, how often would you like to receive future issues?

- a. Twice a year
- b. More Frequently
- c. Less frequently
- d. No Opinion

4. How readable is *All Children Considered*?

- a. Easy
- b. Average difficulty
- c. Difficult
- d. No opinion

5. For the following sections of the newsletter, select how helpful they are to you:

- 1 = not at all
 2 = somewhat
 3 = average
 4 = mostly
 5 = very
- _____ Feature articles
- _____ Caregivers Resource Corner
- _____ State Agency Update
- _____ Child Care Mailbag

6. How long have you worked as a child care provider?

- a. Less than 1 year
- b. 1- 3 years
- c. 4- 6 years
- d. More than 6 years

7. What type of child care service do you currently provide?

- a. Family day care home
- b. Group day care home
- c. Center based day care
- d. Family, friend, or neighbor (Kith & Kin)
- e. Other, please specify

8. Which age groups describe the children most often in your care?

- a. Birth to 3 years
- b. 3 to 5 years
- c. 5 and older

9. Do you provide services to children with special needs?

- a. Yes
- b. No

10. If you answered yes, please check the age groups of the children with special needs that you primarily serve:

- a. Birth to 3 years
- b. 3 to 5
- c. 5 and older

11. Do you have any suggestions or comments to share about our publication?

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Street Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Ages _____ Ages _____

Circle preference of "Fundana" Game: 3-6 7-12

Please share the newsletter with all staff.

Child Care 2-1-1 Mailbag

Question: How can I help the children in my program become “Green” and more aware of the importance of caring for our natural environment?

Answer: There are a number of simple ways to give back to the community that can have a positive impact, are fun, and would get the children actively involved. Here are some ideas to incorporate in your child care program to raise awareness of the footprints we are leaving on the earth:

- Ask parents to bring in items such as paper towel rolls, newspapers, magazines for art projects, or shoe boxes to create a guessing sensory activity or egg cartons to utilize for painting, sorting, and counting activities. These are all ways to reuse the materials that would typically go into landfills.
- Incorporate “Earth Day” philosophy into your program all year round. Brainstorm with children on daily activities to conserve water, paper, and energy. Teach recycling within your child care program.



- Go to a local organic farm, nature center, trash or garbage museum, city park, or one of Connecticut’s 138 state parks and forests to help children learn about caring for the natural environment. Two such activities are planting a tree (check your local park and see if they have a Plant-A-Tree program) or going apple picking at a local Farm. This may help to keep economic growth in your area and get the children out and moving around. You can also participate in other programs of the CT Department of Environmental Protection [Ed. note: See the “No Child Left Inside” article in this newsletter].

If you have any questions, need help in brainstorming other ideas, or are interested in other Go Green referrals, please feel free to contact us at 2-1-1 Child Care by dialing 2-1-1 or 800.505.1000. 