

Center News

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A Newsletter for Federal Child Care Centers

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The GSA Nationwide Network of Child Care Coordinators

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National Capital Region Celebrates the Diplotots Playground Renovation

The Diplotots child care center sponsored by the State Department in Washington, DC, held a ribbon cutting for their newly renovated playground. This project was a joint effort funded by GSA and the State Department. The new playground consists of Diplotots Village, which includes a music store with a variety of usable instruments, a preschool structure with multiple play options, a play house, and a sand box with a simulated rock stream. Guest speakers at the ceremony were Ambassador Harry K. Thomas Jr. for the State Department and GSA Assistant Regional Administrator Bart Bush. Both speakers addressed the benefits that children from the center would have in playing in this new outside environment. Children from the child care center and their parents helped Ambassador Thomas and ARA Bush cut the ribbon.



Fallon Federal Child Development Center Moves to New Space

The Fallon center in Baltimore, MD recently moved from leased space to newly renovated space inside the Fallon Federal Building. Along with the beautiful new center adjacent to the playground, a much needed infant program has been added creating a full service center for Federal employees.



Boards' Business

By Jill Rhea

A Sneak Peak into the 19th Annual GSA Child Care Conference!

Being on the Board of Directors for your child care center is a challenge! GSA supports your efforts to create a strong board. This year's conference will be held July 8 – 10, 2008 in beautiful San Francisco, California and includes a Board Track that will address many timely issues to help you navigate the changes and challenges your nonprofit faces.

Currently the Board Track includes Roger Neugebauer, publisher, Exchange Press, Inc who will present "Why Boards Don't Work; How They Should Work". "Not So Scary After All" will be a financial management session. Other fast-paced workshop topics include strategic planning for boards, attracting and retaining board members and the ever popular fundraising session!

Come join us for stimulating discussions, learning and networking. This will be a conference worth attending. We look forward to seeing you in the City by the Bay!



19th Annual GSA Child Care Training Conference

July 8-10, 2008

Parc 55 Hotel, 55 Cyril Magnin Street, Market at Fifth, San Francisco, California

The conference will begin Tuesday afternoon with meetings with Regional Child Care Coordinators and the Welcome Reception and Cornerstone Awards. There will be breakout sessions and a luncheon on the 9th and 10th with the conference ending at 5 PM on July 10. Timothy R. Shope, MD, MPH will conduct a general session fighting the war on germs: "Spit Happens."

Tours of the new San Francisco Federal Building are being built into the conference schedule. Tours will require Government issued picture identification with individual's names pre-vetted for security reasons.

Conference Registration Fees

	<u>Early Bird</u>	<u>After June 14, 2008</u>
Teachers/Caregivers	\$215	\$240
Directors/Assistant Directors	\$275	\$300
All Others	\$340	\$365

Hotel reservations can be made by calling the hotel at 1.800.595.0507, ask for the "GSA Child Care Training Conference" room block. The daily rate is \$152.00 plus tax, single/double occupancy (each additional adult is \$20) and children 18 and under are free. The hotel reservation cutoff date is June 14, 2008 and the conference rate will be honored three day pre and one day post based on availability at the time of reservation.

For the most up-to-date information, visit our website at www.gsa.gov/childcare or call the conference hotline at 202.501.3965.

The Process of Accreditation

A Teacher's View

This year has been one of the most meaningful years for me as the staff worked toward achieving national accreditation. Accreditation is not something that is achieved in a short period of time. It is a process that can take more than a year to complete. Even though I have been through this process several times before, this time was different. The standards seemed much higher and as a staff we put a lot more work into meeting certain goals than we ever had before

In the fall of 2005 each classroom started evaluating their area. In the toddler program when we went over the required criteria we were initially pleased to realize we were already meeting most of the criteria. In the summer of 2006 we started having frequent classroom meetings. The two toddler rooms met together and decided the main goal we needed to focus on was bringing more culture into the classrooms. We felt the best way to do this was by getting to know more about the families in our classroom. In the fall of 2006 we implemented tooth brushing into our daily routine. At first this seemed like an entirely big deal. We wondered how we were going to fit it into our after lunch routine. How would we possibly get all those teeth brushed on top of everything else that needed to be done? We adjusted the routine as needed and soon it felt like something we had always done.

In 2007 we changed our way of lesson planning as we learned about the Creative Curriculum. Each week we set individual goals for the children and based our activities on their needs, strengths, and interests. The Creative Curriculum also includes formally assessing the children several times each year. This has been another new criteria which took time for us to learn and implement.

As we approached summer we knew that we would have to provide some sort of portfolio for accreditation, but didn't know what it would entail. We started taking pictures of everything we were doing; art activities, music time, children playing, etc. Eventually we found out what was required. I have to admit I was overwhelmed at first. The portfolio needed to include evidence for a thick packet of criteria. As teachers we needed to have evidence to prove that we were meeting each criteria. Evidence includes, pictures, lesson plans, letters to families, etc. Putting together the portfolio was one of the biggest jobs I have had to do. I haven't worked so hard since college. Yet in the end, once it was completed, the portfolio has become a great source of pride for me. It made me really stop and think about everything my co-worker and I were doing in our classroom. We couldn't just say we were doing something in our room. We had to prove it.

The last step in the accreditation process was preparing for the validation visit. We spent a lot of time talking about what it would be like when the validator came. Finally it was the

A Director's Thank You

To our Success...

"Spectacular achievements are always preceded by unspectacular preparation"

With great trepidation, little confidence and assorted moments of anger, confusion and hopelessness, we all began this journey toward accreditation. Initially, there were blank stares and frustration until we all realized that there really was no right way to approach this endeavor. As we waded through the paperwork and just decided to do it...in our own way and making up the rules as we went... the terror receded and determination took root. We realized that working together, sharing ideas and methods helped. Teamwork became the vehicle of survival. We turned to one another with questions and answers. "I" became "we" and it was "us" against "them" as we tried to outsmart those who created the uncharted territory we were traveling.

"You can do what you have to do and sometimes you can do it even better than you think you can"

At long last, the day arrived when judgment would occur. We were confident in our abilities, but would the assessor see us in the same light??? Would something unexpected occur? Would one of us inadvertently do something wrong? For those who were observed, it was stressful but rewarding that all the work was examined. For those who were not, there was relief, but also disappointment that all the work was unexamined. It appeared that all went well, but we couldn't be sure, and so the waiting game began...until the New Year brought news that, indeed, success was ours.

"A job worth doing is worth doing together"

Working toward accreditation was a group effort. In particular, teachers went above and beyond to assemble the required classroom portfolios and assure that their rooms met the criteria. Many hours of personal time went toward assuring success, as well as additional hours at FCC. While this was occurring, assistant teachers and floaters manned the classrooms, carrying more of the classroom responsibilities. They supported the teachers and assisted in many ways. While we all found the process frustrating and laborious, it did indeed call forth teamwork and bring out the very best in all of us!

"The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence regardless of their chosen field of endeavor"

The fact that FCC is a wonderful place for children was never in doubt... The fact that the staff is the heart and soul of this program is apparent... You are dedicated, talented and knowledgeable about early childhood programming and making a difference for children. Had we, for some reason,

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Of the GSA centers eligible for NAEYC Accreditation, 84% are now accredited.

Congratulations to the following centers on their recent reaccreditations:

- Triangle Tots, Washington DC, managed by Bright Horizons
- Little Explorers, Silver Spring, MD, managed by Bright Horizons
- Mary Switzer, Washington, DC, managed by Georgetown Hill
- Federal Children's Center of Northern Virginia, Herndon, VA
- Little Aviators, Hawthorne, CA, managed by National Pediatric Support Services
- Uncle Sam's Center, Des Moines, IA, managed by Bright Horizons
- Dirksen Baby Room, Chicago, IL, managed by CCC Learning Centers
- Kinderplatz, Fort Snelling, MN
- AFC Child Enrichment Center, Atlanta, GA, managed by Easter Seals
- Federal Kids, Newark, NJ, managed by Imagine Early Learning Center
- Y'sTime, St. Albans, VT, managed by the YMCA
- Kathy Herward Center, Andover, MA



big day. I was confident, but nervous. When I arrived at work I was told that my room would be observed that morning. In many ways I was glad my room was chosen. I wanted to show all the good things that had been accomplished. Once the validator walked in the hour went fast. I was glad that he had a smile on his face and I was proud for him to see our room in action. It seemed unreal that something I had thought about for so long and played scenarios in my mind was actually taking place. Then the observation was over. I was actually disappointed he didn't stay for our music time. When he left the room he said, "You can relax now the observation is over".

Wow! The observation was over. The portfolio was complete. After the entire visit was finished I had many mixed emotions; pride, happiness, and even a little boredom. Suddenly I didn't know what to do with myself.

Now there are new goals to achieve. Accreditation never really ends. Teachers need to maintain the high standards and continue to set new goals. There is always more to learn. A good program continues to grow. The accreditation process has helped me in achieving high goals for myself. I have learned new things and in the end I am grateful to have gone through the process.

Janet Zarich
 Toddler Coordinator
 Kinderplatz, Fort Snelling, MN
 13 years tenure

not attained accreditation, it would not change who we are and the wonderful work we do...However, we were successful, and we now belong to a very small and exclusive group who can be identified as the very best. It is an honor and accomplishment of which to be proud! When we attend the VAECE conference on Feb. 15th we will all wear ribbons on our name badges proclaiming our success!

Tonight we celebrate our accomplishments and success together. Tomorrow it's back to the work we do...loving, teaching and molding the future!

Congratulations and Thank You!!!!!!!
 Judy Johnston
 Director, Federal Childrens Center of Northern Virginia

To read Janet's letter in it's entirety please go to www.gsa.gov/childcare to the Child Care Center Spotlight section found under the Child Care Centers tab on the left.

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Contributions and Comments on Center News are welcome and encouraged.

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