

KIDBIZ NEWSLETTER
MARCH 2010

A Newsletter for Early Childhood & Child Care Professionals

Brought to you by:
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To all family child care providers – I need your help! NAFCC is working on it's first book, called "Homeplaces" and I have agreed to do the chapter on environments. As you all know, it's a topic I am very passionate about. I firmly believe we should not be creating cookie-cutter environments that all look the same, but rather ones that reflect and support the personalities and interests of the adults and children in them. It's one of the wonderful things about family child care, we all bring a piece of ourselves and our goals for the children into our decisions for the environment we create – from providing a "home" environment that remains looking like a home and simply opens its doors to warmly invite children and families to become a part of our extended family, to turning our basements into preschool classrooms, and everything in-between! I need your stories! Please, write to me and tell me about your FCC environment, and why you chose to make it what it is. We will be using lots of these "vignettes" throughout the book. If yours is used, I will send you a free copy of the finished book. Send your comments to: pdischler@wildblue.net and put "Homeplaces Entry" in the subject line. Thanks so much for helping me and NAFCC with this exciting new project!

In case you are wondering, yes- I went sledding alone, and no- none of the neighbors saw, and yes- it was so fun!

*Hug a kid for me!
Patricia*

Newsletters

At Patty Cake Preschool, each month I sat down at my typewriter and wrote a newsletter to share with my daycare families. (Yes, I said typewriter, for you young kids out there it's a computer with no batteries and no screen, you stick a paper in it and put letters directly onto the paper when you type! Yeah – no printer, cool huh?!) I followed this ritual for 17 years and at times it was something I looked forward to as I had some exciting news or story about a child to share, other times I would sit for long minutes staring at the blank page and trying to force some words to appear. But eventually, I'd begin, and each time when I finished I'd feel a sense of accomplishment. Not because I had finished the task, but because in doing it I had relived the previous month's activities with the children. I could now see in black and white (nope, no fancy fonts or colors on a typewriter either!) the legacy I was leaving. My imprint on this world – one month of opportunities to make a difference in lives of children and families and how I took those opportunities seriously.

I now have binders full of these 17 years and they've become a kind of talisman of my career. Sometimes they're funny, sometimes they're sad, some are filled with solid advice for parents, some are filled with touching stories of the children's experiences, and there's the last one where I attempt to share the heartbreaking decision I had made to close and move on to a new career. As I look from them now, my mind is filled with pictures of moments and memories made with those children and families. Which is why I wrote them: memories. Each of my families whose children blessed my days has a box or a binder that is filled with these newsletters as well. I've attended high school graduation parties for children who once came to my daycare and often they tell me of how precious it is to them to have these recordings from their first years.

This is what I challenge you to do: look beyond a newsletter as being a tedious task in sharing useless information with families just to be doing so, and see it as an opportunity to record for history the moments that you hope the children in your care remember forever. See it as a working journal for your daycare and the children in it, go beyond the lists of monthly themes, or calendar events, or parenting tips, and make it personal. Share your hopes and fears, and make it a snapshot of one month in the life of those children you love so much!

How do you accomplish this? What should you be writing about? What if you're not a natural-born storyteller? (Like myself and every other "Flogel Baby" out there, as Grandma would say!) There are many tricks to breathing some life into your basic newsletter format. Here's some ideas:

-Create a "Things Kids Say" column. Start recording all the funny things the children say throughout the day. You know what I mean, those moments when they make a comment and it instantly cracks you up – keep a small notebook nearby and write them down! I put some of my favorites at the beginning of each chapter in my book, *From Babysitter to Business Owner*, so look at them to see

what I mean. Like one of my favorites: Bret, while playing hide and seek was asked to count to 20. His frantic reply: "I can't count to 20, I can only count to 19!"

-Highlight a different child each month. Interview them! Make it fun by using a microphone, and setting up a stage or studio and acting as the reporter. Have the other children be reporters and ask questions as well. (Be sure to make a tape of this to give to the family too!) Find out their favorite color, food, game, toy, animal, etc. Ask what they want to be when they grow up, to describe their Grandparents, to make a wish, to say what they would do if they were President, or the teacher. For infants and toddlers, write a play-by-play of their day, every action, babble sound, smile and cry. Describe how they look, smell, react to situations, eat, what they like to hear. Attach a copy of some art they did or a fun photo of them. (For me "attach" meant staple the actual item to each families newsletter, not hit an "attach file" button to do it for me!)

-Give a play by play of the great accomplishments from the previous month. Include names of children, what they did, what they enjoyed, what they said, any milestones they reached. Talk about what you did (and/or your staff), fieldtrips you took, themes you covered, new toys or equipment used and how the children enjoyed them, specific activities the children participated in and how they liked them, etc.

-Talk about what your hopes and plans are for the coming month, what you'll be teaching, what fieldtrips are planned, any special speakers or activities planned that you look forward to, any special goals for the children such as a toddler getting close to taking those first steps or words or a preschooler who's almost mastered writing their name.

-Invite the parents to be more involved. Be specific! Don't just put out a general "you're always welcome" statement, say you need X number of parents at X time on X day to do a specific activity and you'll be more successful at getting them in. Make it sound fun and something their child would love for them to be a part of.

-Best tip – mention every child's name somewhere in the newsletter. Parents are more likely to read it if they think something specific about their own beloved child will be in it!

What else should be in a newsletter? Lots of information. The newsletter is your opportunity to communicate with parent and educate them. They don't know about the new licensing rules, what a Food Program is and how it benefits their child, what quality care looks like, the benefits of a field trip or what "developmentally appropriate" means unless you tell them! They don't know when Week of the Young Child is, or Provider Appreciation Day, or your birthday is unless you tell them! They don't know that you spend all weekend scouring garage sales to get cool new equipment and toys for the kids or that you spent all day on a beautiful Saturday inside at a training on child development for their kids unless you tell them! The more you share, the more they know, the more they know, the more they will understand what you do, why you do it and how to show you appreciation for it!

And finally, provide them all the help you can to do their job – parenting. Share articles/tips you find online or in other newsletters or from your R&R, give them a “Parent Activity” to do each month with their child. Provide phone numbers for resources like the poison center, invite them to attend a CPR training with you.

Whether you do them on a typewriter like I did, or use one of those fancy new pre-formatted ones from Publisher or some other program, remember that the way to make newsletters effective – and something the parents will read and even keep – is to make it a monthly journal showcasing your daycare business, and their child. There’s a great example a provider has allowed me to share with you, she is Monica Jackson from Jackson Family Child Care and you can see her newsletters on her website at: www.jacksonchildcare.vpweb.com. I love the photos she shares! A great way to share stories when you don’t feel comfortable writing them.

I treasure my binders full of newsletters with their hand-drawn logos on the top and children’s artwork stapled to the back. I turn to them whenever I start to doubt myself and instantly am reminded of all the ripples I started out there in this world. I read them and see children growing up, and families getting strong. I see myself growing as a professional and my business improving its quality. Do more than report and record: share. Share a snapshot of your month that you and the families will treasure forever.

For more ideas on communicating with parents and doing newsletters, see the chapter by the same title in my book “From Babysitter to Business Owner” available on the website: www.patriciadischler.com. And check out the great new product from the Chicago Metro AEYC in the “In the News” section below!

TIPS AND TRICKS

It’s Spring and that means: MUD! My tip? Don’t fight it – dive in! Mud is a great sensory activity, makes cool brown finger paint, terrific clay for modeling, and is a blast to smear all over something like an upside down bowl or your Little Tike playhouse in the yard! Use big brushes and it’s even more fun! Bring it in, go out and play in it, put it in Ziploc bags if you must to cut down on the mess, but by all means wallow in a little mud this month!

And a few tips for those of you who don’t love messiness as much as I do:

- Request the kids have rain boots, or tap a plastic bag over their shoes to keep them dry.
- Get a boot bin from the home improvement store to put boots in when you come inside so mud doesn’t drip off on to your floor.
- Have the kids continue to wear their snow pants, but with out coats, when weather is warming up to protect their clothes from the mud.

- Keep a small bin of water near the door to step into and rinse mud off of shoes/boots before going in.
- Experiment with mud in zipped up plastic baggies. Put them in the hot sun versus the freezer to see how it changes.

For more great tips, check out my booklet: "101 Tips & Tricks: Ideas to make your job easier, save you money and save you time in your child care business! On sale right now on the products page at: www.patriciadischler.com/books.htm.

If you have some great tips to share, send them to: contact@patriciadischler.com, putting "NEWSLETTER TIPS" in the subject line to be included in the next newsletter!

KIDBIZ BLOG

On the blog this month, I want to open up a conversation about quality rating systems. We are working on one here in Wisconsin so I'll post some info from that, and whether you are in WI or not, let me know what you think works and what doesn't.

Join in the conversation and visit <http://kidbiz.blogspot.com> today!

The KIDBIZ Blog is a place where I can share all the great articles and information I have access to and think you should have access to as well! If you've found a great article or website that you think should be shared with others in our field, send it to me so I can post it and pass it on!

IN THE NEWS

CHICAGO METRO AEYC Launches An Exciting New Product: *Connections* Newsletter for Parents!

This exciting new product will save you time and effort in communicating with parents at your center, school or family child care business. Their customized newsletter will help you communicate easily and effectively with parents, maintain a professional image and provide resources and articles for parents to enjoy. It is offered FREE to Chicago Metro AEYC Members and only \$5 a month for non-members. For more information visit: www.chicagometroaeyc.org.

Join Wisconsin Family Child Care Association at the "Rumble in the Jungle!" Annual State Conference!

Fantastic speakers, 15 hours of continuing education hours, fun keynotes, and yes, I'll be there too! Come join the fun at the Kalahari Resort and Waterpark and bring the entire family! You've never seen anything like the Kalahari in the

Wisconsin Dells – ENORMOUS inside waterpark (with warm water!), an indoor waterpark with ferris wheel and more, live animals like baby lions to have your family photo taken with, incredible restaurants and so much more! What a great way to spend Mother's Day weekend – I hope to see you there! May 6-8, 2010, for more info visit: www.wisconsinfamilychildcare.org.

INTRODUCING the Launch of My New Business: KIDBIZ Resources™!

I have been told by many of the CCR&Rs I've met that they use my book, *From Babysitter to Business Owner* as their "Bible" when training providers. So now, the same information they love from the book is put together in power point presentations, with lecture notes, participant handouts, an outline and a list of learner outcomes, to support these staff in the important work they do! I am very excited to share this information and through these staff, help even more providers raise their professionalism and increase their success with children and their businesses! In addition to the training guides, the website will offer articles you can use in your newsletters, books and other products to support your work, and for those looking for staff trainings, a list of my Train-the-Trainer courses. Basically, I created KIDBIZ Resources™ to help you train and inform the teachers and providers in your area by providing you and your staff with the keys to success! Check out the new website now! www.KIDBIZResources.com

NAFCC 2010 Conference is in Nashville, Tennessee!

The conference theme is "Creating Harmony: Tuning into children through partnerships and professionalism." Conference will be at the beautiful Renaissance Hotel right in the heart of Nashville. Preconference days are filled with in-depth, high level training for providers, trainers, and support staff. Conference days include dozens of workshops by quality presenters and lots of entertainment and networking! Once again, NAFCC will offer the popular payment plan option so you can fit this amazing opportunity for professional development into your schedule. I will be presenting two "Train-the-Trainer" half-day sessions during preconference: *From Babysitter to Business Owner* and *Teaching the Three C's*. Participants will receive FREE copies of the KIDBIZ Trainers Guides for each session (A value of \$185!). Visit www.nafcc.org for more information! And, I'll see you there!

Provider Appreciation Day 2010

NACCRRRA and NAFCC join together to help organizations and individuals celebrate Provider Appreciation Day! Visit the website for loads of ideas and products to help you make the most of this event: www.ProviderAppreciation.org.

THIS MONTH'S SALE ITEMS

March Sale Item: KIDIBIZ Resources™ Teleseminar Set – 50% Off!

This set includes the audio CD and handout, plus training certificate, for the following seven workshops: Marketing & Interviews, From Braggers to Biters, Professional Image, Your Space/Their Space, Holiday Tips & Tricks, Creating A Parent Handbook, and Parent's Can't Hear Me! A total of 7.5 hours of training! Listen to the CD's in the comfort of your home and get the training you need! Also great for directors who do staff trainings.

Regular Price: \$120 Sale Price \$60!

April Sale Item: Because I Loved You: A Birthmother's View of Open Adoption – 25% Off!

Part my memoir, part resource guide for adoptive parents and birthmothers, this book shares my personal story of placing my son in an open adoption and the subsequent years of building a trustful and respectful relationship with his adoptive parents. The book has been endorsed by 5 national adoption agencies and is guaranteed to make you cry! But I promise, it has a happy ending and is filled with lessons for us all on respect and understanding and the good that it can bring to a child's life. April is my son's birthday, so I always have a sale on this book during the month to honor him. In addition, this year, for every book sold in April I will be donating a book to Catholic Charities so they can pass them out to the women who come to them and are struggling with their decision in an unplanned pregnancy.

Regular Price \$16.95 Sale Price \$12.71

Order yours today at: www.patriciadischler.com or www.KIDBIZResources.com!

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 10, 2010
Staff Training at Neighborhood House
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
For staff only.

March 27, 2010
Community Action of Eastern Iowa Provider Recognition Event
Davenport, Iowa
Training: *Teaching the 3Cs: Creativity, Curiosity & Courtesy*
For more information contact: Doris Mathews, 563-324-3239
www.iacomunityaction.org

April 17, 2010
Half Day Training for Family Connections, Inc.
Cleveland, Wisconsin
Creating Inspirational Child Care Environments &

Teaching the 3 Cs: Creativity, Curiosity & Courtesy
For more information contact: Family Connections,
www.familyconnectionscc.org, 920-457-1999

April 24, 2010

Half Day Training for 4C part of their Provider Appreciation Event
Malta, Illinois

Teaching the 3 Cs: Creativity, Curiosity & Courtesy

For more information contact: 4C, www.four-c.org, 815-758-8149.

If you are a member of a group planning a training event and would like to book one of my keynotes or workshops, visit the Lecture page on my website and contact me for availability. Visit www.patriciadischler.com/lecture.php.

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