

Farewell and Good Luck

MARCH BIRTHDAYS:

4th -- Easton S.
6th -- Elliot S.
10th -- Lachlan D.
16th -- Miss Donna K.
18th -- Dakota G.
19th -- Olivia H.
19th -- Miss Bailey
20th -- Jack B.
27th -- Norah H.



Good luck, Michelle!

Our long-time assistant director, Miss Michelle, is moving to Texas at the end of this month, and I can think of nothing better than to honor her in our newsletter this month! Miss Michelle has been a staple here at Kid Country since August of 2004 and is an essential part of our family.

Michelle started as a teacher in our Yellow Ducks classroom, where she quickly set the standard for infant care. She provided top notch care and education and did it all by having fun! Her fun-loving spirit and energy were contagious and everyone enjoyed working with Michelle. She worked with our youngest children until she was promoted to Assistant Director in 2008, where she has been the "glue" that holds this place together ever since!

Michelle's biggest strength is her ability to see both sides of every situation, along with the positive in everything! She has a great deal of compassion for everyone here at Kid Country and will literally give you the shirt off her back if you need it. It does not matter if the job is big or small, she puts the same 100% into it every time, along with her heart!

Michelle has been instrumental in Kid Country becoming the top-notch center we are today. A few of the things she deserves recognition for are

the Silver Circle of Quality designation since 2015; the transformation of our summer program from ordinary to extraordinary; the implementation of our assessment program and cooperating agreements with outside agencies to support our efforts; and our exceptional productions (holiday shows, graduation, week of the young child, etc.). And she still gives potty breaks, covers classroom shifts, changes dirty diapers and washes the dishes, answers the phones and greets everyone with a smile! Over the years, she has put more and more on her plate and continued to grow as a director and an early childhood educator. She has become a mentor to our teachers and has never lost that fun-loving spirit we all fell in love with back in 2004!

It has been an absolute pleasure to have worked side by side with Michelle for over sixteen years. **Michelle, you will forever be missed! You are a gem in our industry and Kid Country has been blessed to have you! We wish you all the best on your journey – Texas has no idea how lucky they are to have you heading their way!**

Donna

Be sure to read Michelle's Farewell message on Page 3.

YELLOW DUCKS

February was filled with love for new objectives in the Yellow Ducks classroom. The Yellow Ducks focused on the foundation of making connections within their bodies. There are a variety of methods to demonstrate and stimulate the connections of hand-eye coordination, depth perception, and motor skills. During free play the younger infants explore the mechanics of these connections using toy arches and interactive toys while engaging in tummy time.

As a special part of our February lesson plans, Ms. Emily set up a fun, creative painting activity. The children with the ability to jump in the jump-a-roo participated in painting with their feet. Ms. Emily spread red and purple paint on the white construction paper and placed it under the child. The children displayed many facial expressions as their bare feet touched the cool paint. This activity supported several dimensions of development such as physical with jumping, balancing, core stability, and coordination. The jump-a-roo was supporting most of their bodies for comfort; however, they were still able to focus on the connection between their movements and the marks of paint.

The Yellow Duck teachers strive to find opportunities in every routine and interaction to enhance the children's abilities. We complete this by providing a variety of fine motor toys and placing them around the child to encourage balanced movements from each side of their bodies. We also turn everyday fun into learning objectives such as painting while in the jump-a-roo. The children have responded well to these activities and the teachers are excited to try new fun activities each week. Miss Emily, Miss Leslie and Miss Karen



GREEN FROGS

As the warmer weather slowly began to make its way back to Manhattan, we finished our study of the Arctic. This unit brought the Frogs many fun and educational activities about the animals, climate, and lifestyle in the frigid Arctic environment. The end of the Arctic study brought us to Valentine's day! This holiday is always a favorite at Kid Country as it gives us an opportunity to show the important people in our lives how much we love and appreciate them.

The Green Frogs worked hard to decorate the room in colorful artwork featuring hearts, stickers, and their adorable Frog faces, of course! Love was in the air at our Valentine's Day party as we enjoyed heart balloon toss and even balloon bounce with the parachute! We got crafty as the Frogs created unique "love bugs" to take home to the people they love most: their families! Thank you to each of the families who donated supplies and party favors to make this day such a success!

As we move forward, we have begun to focus on our gross and fine motor coordination in the Frog room. Fine motor coordination is the ability to make movements using the small muscles in our hands and wrists and gross motor involves the large muscle groups of our bodies. To sharpen our gross motor skills, the Frogs are participating in physical activities inside of the classroom. Some of the activities that we have enjoyed so far include walking on the balance

beam and small stairs and passing balls back and forth to one another while turning at our waists to strengthen our core muscles.

As the weather continues to warm up, we will also be spending as much time outside as possible to strengthen our bodies. To strengthen our fine motor muscles, we are using our pincer grips often to make pictures with stickers and small pieces of paper that require precision and patience. We are also using our counting beads and gems to outline shapes and trace letters. We will continue to practice important pre-writing skills in the classroom as the Frogs gain confidence and strength in their fine motor skills. Miss Fran, Miss Wendy and Miss Stephanie



PURPLE PARROTS

The Purple Parrots have been learning a lot about love, friendships, and sharing in the month of February! The Parrots were first able to experience this through Valentine's Day themed activities and crafts. They were able to work on their sharing skills with helping one another put "chocolates" away in a Valentine's Day Box.

Friendships were strengthened at the Valentine's Day party by helping one another make pink fluffy slime and playing games with their fellow classmates. The toddlers are starting to build friendships with one another. As they become older, they start to seek out preferred classmates to play along with. What a great month we had filled with love and friendships.

Since the beginning of the month the Purple Parrots have focused on the colors red, pink, and purple, so we thought it would be fun to start working more on learning the colors of the rainbow. The Parrots spent one week focused on primary and then the second week was spent learning about secondary colors. This then led to learning more about the rainbow which is perfect timing for St. Patrick's Day! Learning more about colors makes life a little bit brighter and that is exactly what transformed the classroom into a rainbow wonderland.

The Purple Parrots had a craft to correspond with each color and then during circle time each day, the teacher would reinforce the colors that are being taught. This would lead the teachers to encourage each child to identify various colors in the classroom each day as well.

The Purple Parrots are excited to celebrate spring coming soon and cannot wait for warmer weather to play outside! Miss Victoria, Miss Kathy, Miss Emily S., and Miss Karen

Miss Michelle's Farewell

It is a bittersweet farewell! Over 17 years ago, fresh out of college, I saw an ad for an Early Childhood teacher in Manhattan. The only reason I had ever heard of Manhattan was due to my Grandparents occasionally wanting the family to make the drive up here on Sundays to visit with Father O'Malley from St. Joe's. So I figured I would give it a shot and get my feet wet in childcare before I moved on to my dream job of teaching 3rd grade. Oh, how my dream job changed so quickly.

Through my clinicals and student teaching, I never had the experience of working directly with babies or toddlers. Actually seeing the development and growth at such a young age was all I needed! The children had me hooked! Their personalities and love made it easy to come to work every day! The thought of school district days were long gone and the rest is history.

It is hard to believe that I have spent my entire adult life at Kid Country. This place is my family through and through and will continue to be. It has helped me grow, it has helped define who I want to be, it has provided so much opportunity, and so much more. I have learned from one of the strongest, smartest, and loving leaders. Miss Donna has created an environment set up for anyone to succeed! Even through a small business crisis. My co-teachers have become some of my closest friends. The connections we share go way beyond the walls of Kid Country, lifelong relationships.

The relationships created with you, the families, are what drive me each day to do better than the last. Entrusting me with your most precious gift, means the world to me. And the kiddos, I know they may not remember me but please know they are forever a huge part of my heart.

Although I am so very excited to begin this new chapter, it is indeed bittersweet! I have shed more tears these past few weeks than I care to admit. I am so sad to be leaving the children, families, and the staff. I will miss the daily laughs, smiles, and hugs dearly. A piece of my heart will be left behind. Please know that I genuinely appreciate and thank you for being a part of my life! Thank you for sharing your children with me day in and day out. I am forever grateful for Kid Country and all it has provided me!

Many Thanks, Miss Michelle

RED ROBINS

The month of February brought love and new experiences to the Red Robins classroom. To start getting ready to become Green Frogs in a short few months, the teachers started introducing stations throughout the classroom for the Robins to play in. They played in each station for several minutes and when the timer went off, they switched. This type of structure teaches the Robins patience and also to work on one task for more than a few minutes. The Robins caught onto the stations rather quickly and were exited each time the timer went off and they were able to switch stations.

The Robins also celebrated love and

relationships by having our annual Valentine's Day party! The Robins were excited to share a special treat, and to make lovely dinosaurs. We also talked about the importance of friendship and being nice and caring to friends.

As March approaches, the weather will continue to become nicer and warmer out. We have slowly started to go outside when it is warm enough. This means, we are playing in the snow and water and your child might come home wet! Please provide the proper materials for your child to play in the wet snow.

Miss Krista and Miss Jenna

ORANGE OWLS

As we dove straight into the ocean this month, we began with what we already knew about the ocean and, for those of us that have been there, what it was like to experience. We discussed the oceans' vast number of inhabitants and how many of them differ though they call the same place home. After this discussion, we dove deeper into each ocean zone to get to the bottom of who lives in each, how they survive, and the similarities and differences of the zones in the various oceans, even though the oceans are one large body of water that cover the entire Earth!



We explored many ocean creatures and how much or how little each need to survive as well as any similarities or differences. Coming to find out there are many ways that these ocean dwellers are similar in the facts of how they must all

hunt, have certain types of fins or gills to help themselves swim, or even how they must find and establish their homes to keep safe from predators.

Within all this fun knowledge and facts

we were able to really put our measuring and precise fine motor capabilities to the test. We measured various fish, lengths of a whales' spouts, and seashells. Our fine motor was incorporated in many activities for the Owls this month. From ripping and tearing small paper and tape, to being able to cut starfish and seahorses from thick, unusual

medias.

We loved being able to explore the depths of the ocean and create all of these magnificent creatures that call the ocean home!

Miss Bailey, Miss Molly and Miss Kelly

Blue Gills

The frigid weather didn't slow down the Blue Gills this month. Because of the cold temperatures, we decided that it was a great time to learn all about Arctic animals and demonstrate a little knowledge of characteristics of living things. We also were able to tie in some Social Studies as we explored some simple geography of our polar regions.

As we learned all about polar bears, we found out that underneath all of that thick white fur is black skin. We also used some comparisons as we measured a full-grown polar bear (9 ft. tall) against our own shorter heights.

Penguins taught us how to count to 20 as we gave them fish to eat. We also explored penguin dance and movement concepts. As we listened to the music and followed the directions, we quickly learned how to flap our right and left wings, then our right and left feet. Pretty soon we were all getting to be more aware of the right and left sides of our bodies.

Through the numerous Arctic activities that the children in the Blue Gills room had, they explored problem solving, expanded their vocabularies, and interacted with read-a-louds. A lot of goals were met, and a lot of fun was had without getting frostbite! Ms. Rhonda and Ms. Jess

Blue Dolphins

Thankfully, before the big freeze, the beginning of the month brought us some warmer weather. This allowed the Dolphins time to get out and release some energy after a busy school day. While outside, we played group games, such as "Red Light, Green Light", "Mr. Fox" and came up with some relay races. Hopefully within the coming weeks we will be able to get in some more outdoor play in the afternoons.

For Valentine's Day, the Dolphins helped create some unique decorations for the hallway and our classroom. They created heart-shaped chain-links out of various strips of paper and hung them from the ceilings along with their own crafty creations. We also prepared and enjoyed a special snack with friends during our afternoon snack on Friday before the holiday. We played a ton of Minute to Win It games and had fun with challenging each other. It was a blast spending time with our friends and chatting about caring, sharing and friendship!

The kids are all excited to go back to school full time later this month. Our struggles with E-Learning are almost over!!! Looking forward to some warmer weather and more time outside with friends! Ms. Rhonda, Ms. Donna K., and Ms. Jess

