

CHILD CARE

EXTENSION

Spring 2024

Inside

InfoHub: Your Knowledge
and Resource Destination

Parenting Connection

Recipes and Crafts

Program Highlights

Lesson Snapshot

Shout outs!

UofA

DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION

University of Arkansas System

CONTENTS

Spring

Spring Forward 1

Newsletter introduction

InfoHub 2

Your go to spot for exciting information new with every edition

Parenting Connection 3-4

Ideas on how to make lasting connections with children

Spring Recipe and Craft 5-6

Healthy and intuitive for all ages!

Program Highlights 7

See what we have been up to and check out our agent shout-outs!

Cultural Corner 8

Find new ways to learn and experience different cultures all across Arkansas

Additional Resources 9

Get even more in depth information on what we do and who to call





BETWEEN THE LINES

Spring Forward

written by Kayla Machen

As the seasons shift and we bid farewell to winter's chill, it's time to usher in a new chapter filled with promise and potential. In this edition of our newsletter, we're excited to share with you the latest happenings and developments within our community.

From updates on upcoming initiatives to insightful reflections on navigating change, there's plenty to discover and explore as we embrace the spirit of spring.

So sit back, relax, and dive into the stories and updates that await you in these pages. Welcome to our Spring Newsletter – let's embark on this journey of growth and transformation together.

January marked Mental Health Awareness Month, a time to prioritize self-care and support those around us who may be struggling.

We'll delve into valuable insights and resources to help foster mental well-being throughout the year.

As we transition into February, it's essential to highlight Child Dental Health Month. Good oral hygiene habits start early, and we'll provide tips and information to ensure our little ones maintain healthy smiles for years to come.

And as March approaches, we turn our attention to Child Nutrition Month, emphasizing the importance of nourishing our children's bodies and minds with wholesome foods and nutritious meals.

"Children must be taught how to think, not what to think."

"Water your mind with knowledge, and watch it bloom!"

In the garden of knowledge, watering our minds is just as important as tending to the flowers.



Your go to InfoHub

Seasons of Wellness

As we navigate through the calendar year, each month shines a spotlight on crucial facets of health and well-being. With January dedicated to Mental Health Awareness, February emphasizing Child Dental Health, and March focusing on Child Nutrition, we embark on an insightful journey.

January serves as a pivotal time to raise awareness about mental health and advocate for support and understanding. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health conditions affect individuals of all ages, with approximately one in four people experiencing mental illness at some point in their lives. In recent years, the conversation around mental health has gained momentum, with increased efforts to reduce stigma and improve access to resources. Ashley Foster has written a Mental Health First Aid blog with helpful tips on how to manage your mental health. You can find this on the UADA website under our COVID19 resources. Transitioning into February, we shine a spotlight on Child Dental Health Month, emphasizing the importance of instilling early oral hygiene habits in our little ones. According to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), dental caries (cavities) remain one of the most common chronic diseases of childhood.

Establishing good oral hygiene practices from a young age can significantly reduce the risk of dental issues later in life. Finally, as we enter March, our focus shifts to Child Nutrition, underscoring the vital role of wholesome foods in nourishing our children's bodies and minds. Early exposure to healthy eating habits lays the foundation for lifelong wellness. Nutrition Month encourages children to develop a positive relationship with food, empowering them to make informed choices about their diet and adopt healthy eating habits that will benefit them throughout their lives. Best Care offers a nutrition course "Eating With Ease" that teaches how to build healthy eaters for life. This course, and many others, will be available online free later on this year for those interested in gaining PDR credit. We have also included some fun healthy recipes in this newsletter that are great for all ages!



What else do we offer?

Best Care Connected

March 1 this year to January 31, 2025

Best Care Connected is an online professional development course that provides five hours of verified training

Best Care Out of School Time

June 1, 2023- May 31, 2024

Our user-friendly curriculum is designed to promote the Best Care Out of School Time's program



Best Care has just the courses to stay up to date on these topics and more!

Visit

<https://www.uaex.uada.edu/life-skills-wellness/child-care-providers/best-care.aspx>

to find out more!

A close-up photograph of a child's hand holding a bunch of freshly harvested carrots with their green leafy tops. The child is wearing a white shirt. The background is softly blurred, showing other people in a garden setting. The title 'CULTIVATING GROWTH' is overlaid in large, white, serif capital letters at the top of the image.

CULTIVATING GROWTH

Your parenting connection

Introducing children to the world of gardening is more than just an activity; it's a journey of discovery and growth. As they dig their hands into the soil, children form a deeper connection with nature, marveling at the wonder of seeds sprouting into plants and the magic of flowers blooming. Through this hands-on experience, they develop a profound appreciation for the natural world, learning valuable lessons about the interconnectedness of all living things. Beyond the beauty of blossoming flowers and flourishing plants, gardening is a physical endeavor that keeps children active and engaged. Whether they're digging, planting, or watering, gardening involves a range of movements that promote physical health and well-being.

From building strength and coordination to enhancing motor skills, the act of tending to a garden offers a fun and effective way for children to stay active while connecting with the outdoors. Moreover, gardening is a journey of learning and discovery that nurtures children's cognitive development. As they observe the life cycles of plants, investigate the role of soil health, and problem-solve challenges in the garden, children engage in critical thinking and expand their understanding of the world around them. Through this hands-on exploration, they develop valuable skills that extend beyond the garden, preparing them for success in school and beyond.



Lettuce

Lettuce grows quickly, in about 45 to 55 days, so you can plant a little at a time, and it's perfect for growing in a patio pot if you don't have room for a garden.



Radishes

Radishes are a quick-growing veggie that only takes about 40 to 45 days to grow! Plus, kids will have fun pulling these root vegetables from the ground when it's time to harvest.



Carrots

Carrots are a delicious veggie to plant in spring. Make it even more fun by planting rainbow carrots in lots of different colors like orange, yellow, and purple. Carrots take about 2 to 3 months to grow, so they take a little bit of patience, but they're well worth it.



Potatoes

Potatoes vary widely in how long they take to grow, ranging from 70 to 120 days. You can plant them in early spring to have some potatoes ready to eat by the summer. Potatoes are a fun plant for kids to grow because sprouting potatoes can be something like a cool science project.



Tomatoes

Small tomatoes like cherry or grape tomatoes are easy to grow and don't take as long as larger varieties. These will take about 65 to 70 days to grow. They're perfect bite-size fruits for eating right off the vine.



Strawberries

In late spring and early summer, you can plant strawberries for a quick-growing, tasty fruit. Strawberries take about 60 days to grow, and they'll be a big hit with kids because of their sweet taste.

Spring Recipe

25 Minutes

CARROT FRIES

Ingredients

For the carrot fries:

- 1 pound of carrots
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon nutritional yeast
- ½ teaspoon each salt and pepper, or to taste

Supplies:

- Knife
- Cutting Board
- Mixing Bowl
- Air Fryer

Step 1: Peel the carrots

Peel the carrots, cut off the ends, and chop them into French fry shapes. The thinner the carrot fries, the faster they will cook.

Step 2: Mix

In a large bowl, combine the paprika, olive oil, nutritional yeast, salt, and pepper and mix. Add the carrot fries, and use your hands to thoroughly mix everything and coat the carrots with seasonings. Add more oil, if needed, to more easily spread the seasonings.

Step 3: Air Fry

Cook the carrots in the air fryer at 375 degrees Fahrenheit for 15 minutes, shaking or turning the carrots halfway through to prevent burning. Or follow your own air fryer instructions for cooking carrots.

<https://highchairchronicles.com/air-fryer-carrot-fries/>

“Carrots provide
30% of the
vitamin A in the
US diet.”

– U.S. Department of Agriculture



Spring hobby **BOTANY**

When speaking with budding herbalists embarking on their educational path, it's a common sentiment to hear that many wish they had early exposure to the remarkable world of plants. Countless individuals I've encountered express a longing for the realization that their childhood explorations in the backyard could have been enriched by the understanding that nature's bounty offered both sustenance and healing properties.

Below are curated botany activities for kids curated by our fellow Extension agents at PennState!

Seed matching game

Collect a variety of seeds, two of each kind. Tape each seed to a piece of cardboard. Children find the seeds that match. Enhance the learning by adding seed packets for each seed type. Children can match which seed will become which plant.

Composting

Collecting leftovers from snacks and lunches to add to an outdoor compost bin is a great way for children to understand how food can be "recycled" into soil where new food can be grown. There are many internet resources on composting.

Keep a botany journal!

Children can draw pictures or write what they see. Keeping a journal over time helps children to understand the growing cycle.

Botany for beginners. Better Kid Care. (n.d.). <https://extension.psu.edu/programs/betterkidcare/content-areas/environment-curriculum/activities/all-activities/botany-for-beginners>

Want to start a school garden? Check out the Arkansas School Garden Grant Program and the Arkansas School Garden of the Year Contest. Both school garden programs offer grant or contest funding to early childhood education facilities, K-12 schools, and alternative learning environments.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

In-Person Trainings!

We are thrilled to announce that in-person Best Care training sessions are now back in action! Best Care has a total of 30 trainings planned for 2024 and we are looking forward to seeing everyone who has pre-registered or who are planning to attend. Agent Jessica Rodriguez (pictured right) was among one of the first agents to host their in-person trainings along with JoAnn Vann (Clark county)

and Katelyn Kirkham (Nevada) county. Congratulations to cluster 12 on an awesome training, we are looking forward to many more to come! To find trainings near you please contact your local county FCS agent or visit:

www.uaex.uada.edu/counties/default.aspx to find an office near you

Best Care Connected

Best Care Connected has 5 new courses that will be open March 1st, 2024 to January 31st 2025. Best Care Connected provides five hours of free PDR verified professional development training through the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service in partnership with the Arkansas Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education. The new courses are as follows: Music in the Preschool Classroom, Trauma Informed Care



Trainer Jessica Rodriguez teaching an activity

for Preschoolers, Developmentally Appropriate Practice for Infants and Toddlers, Separation Anxiety, and Preschool Behavior Management; Contact Amy Cofer at 501-671-2214 if you any questions.

Best Care Out of School Time

There is still time to get your PDR credit for BCOOST! You have until May 31st to finish the available online courses. We are offering a course in Physical Activity, Survival Kit for New Teachers, and Critical Thinking Skills.

Guiding Children Successfully

Offering up to 30 mail-in hours and 38 online hours of PDR verified training, GCS is a great self-guided training and this year they are getting 2 New Lessons! Be on the lookout for their Cultural Diversity and Inclusivity and Childhood Grief: Recommendations for Caregivers lessons coming soon to UADA Learn.

Visit learn.uada.edu/ to catch theses courses before it's too late!



CULTURE CORNER

Welcome to the Cultural Corner. In this section of our newsletter, we invite you to broaden your horizons, deepen your understanding, and embrace the beauty of cultural exchange. Join us on a journey of discovery as we delve into art, cuisine, traditions, and more!

JOËLLE STORET

Belgian-born artist Joëlle Storet moved to the United States via Austria in 2001. She took inspiration from a young age from Belgian comic books and the influence of one of the foremost novelists of the Congo in the 20th century, her grandfather Zamenga Batukezanga. She has since transmitted her Afro-European style and thematic expositions to the thriving artist community based in Northwest Arkansas. Her art is pictured here on the right and you can support her by purchasing here artventures-nwa.org/

El Centro

El Centro Hispano takes a strength-based approach to help the Latino community acquire the necessary life skills to succeed in Jonesboro.

El Centro Hispano offers English classes to help clients improve their level of conversational English. Listening, speaking, writing, and comprehension skills are tested to determine the best possible level of placement for the student. El Centro offers so much more to improve the lives of Hispanic Families living in Northwest Arkansas. Check them out here www.centrohispanoarkansas.com/

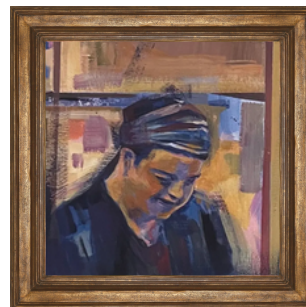


Alcatraz Azul Ceramic Tile Mural



Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts

AMFA offers children a variety of affordable, accessible, and playful educational experiences exploring the visual and performing arts. By attending interactive programs that encourage doing and making and cultivate curiosity in a nurturing learning environment, students foster a love of the arts as they grow into adulthood and beyond.



Work by Joëlle Storet Top
Left: *Communion* Top
Right: *Tiffany*
Bottom Left: *Bek* Bottom
Right: *L' Audace*

Historic Arkansas Museum Loan Boxes

HAM Loan Boxes are a FREE way for you to bring hands-on Arkansas history to your classroom. Each box has a different theme and contains reproduction objects to touch, feel and use to better understand pioneer living and technology.



Charlie Needs a Cloak Loan Box

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Professional Development Registry

<https://pdr.ade.arkansas.gov/>

PDR was designed by the Arkansas Department of Human Services: Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE).

Better Beginnings

<https://arbetterbeginnings.com/>

This website is for parents looking for information about child care in Arkansas or for details about what quality care looks like. It's also for providers and teachers who want to elevate the quality of care they provide or who need additional resources.

Arkansas Department of Human Services

<https://humanservices.arkansas.gov/>

Together we improve the quality of life of all Arkansans by protecting the vulnerable, fostering independence, and promoting better health.

Minimum Licensing Requirements

<https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/office-of-early-childhood/child-care-licensing>

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) recognizes and supports professionalism within early care and education. Use the links below to gain access to helpful resources and to learn more about how the Office ensures children have access to high-quality early care.

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