

The Centerpiece

Country Childrens Center Magazine

Fall/Winter 2022



Little Steps... Big Feats

Country Childrens CenterSM

Serving the Community Since 1967

The Country Childrens Center provides a caring, nurturing, and stimulating environment that meets the individual, social, emotional, physical, creative, aesthetic, and intellectual needs of each child, ages 6 weeks through middle school.

It is our goal to establish a strong self-awareness within each child, which includes a sense of belonging, competence, usefulness, and empowerment.

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Director's Desk

February 2022

Dear CCC families,

Another year has very quickly passed for all of us. Together we have all experienced the changing times and the ups and downs of 2021. Here at the CCC we managed to get through the year well. We are finally starting to get back to normal while at the same time getting comfortable with some of our "new normal" routines and conditions.

Despite the challenges we have faced, we have worked very hard to remain a safe haven for your children, a reliable place for your childcare needs and a positive environment for staff to work in. We feel we have achieved great success in all of these areas.

In the parent survey that went out in June, over 90% of those who responded rated our handling of things during the pandemic as "excellent". We are very proud of this. Also from the survey, we gained that the special programs we have offered over the years are very important to all of you and that there is an overwhelming desire to see these return to our daily work.

To that end we have been working hard to get the programs we can still do safely returned to the Center. Happily, here are some of the things we can report on that have been reinstated. First, we are happy to report that in person weekly music with Robert the Guitar Guy resumed in January. Unfortunately, Mr. Kenny still must remain virtual. We are hoping this too will change soon. While the "zoom" sessions were an attempt to provide something in this regard, they in no way compare to the real thing. Also, piano lessons with Miss Ellen are again offered at some of the pre k sites. We are working on expanding this as well at other sites. This special programming is something unique to the CCC and has been a wonderful addition for those who have participated. Additionally for our school-age population we have returned to some of the elementary schools for before and after school care. We also leased space in at the Lewsiboro Elementary School building so that we could return to our CCVC or vacation care service for these children so that on days when schools are closed they can be provided with meaningful, safe all day activities while their parents are working. Lastly and importantly to many of you, we will begin to provide lunches again as of this month. We are delighted that our previous caterer, Crystal Spoon (Top Chefs), is now able to work with us so that we can safely provide this important part of our program again. 85% of those responding to the parent survey requested that we get back to providing lunches. We are thrilled that this important part of our program will again be possible. This will look a little different than it did in the past but will be a welcome addition no matter the form and hopefully will take a little stress out of your daily routines.

So as we try to get back to some kind of normal here at the CCC, we are so grateful for the trust and cooperation we have had from all of you. The CCC continues to enjoy a great reputation in the community. We promise to never let our guard down in trying to provide you and your children with the best possible program and care that we can and will always strive to preserve that reputation.

As we move forward, we hope to try to get back to all the programming and special events we have provided in the past. Stay tuned for news about our Book Fair, Week of the Young Child activities, Earth Day celebration and our annual Golf event on July 16th.

As always, we are grateful for any donations that you can send our way. You can donate easily on the homepage of our website. www.countrychildrenscenter.org

We promise to use your donations wisely and for the sole purpose of enriching the offerings and services we bring to you and your families.

Wishing you all a healthy and happy spring.

Polly Peace
Executive Director



SIGN-UP NOW!

Country Childrens CenterSM SUMMER ADVENTURE CAMP



The summer camp program is designed to allow children to explore their world and environment with a hands-on approach to learning while teaching teamwork and problem solving. Our unique facility is located in Katonah, New York on four acres of beautiful wooded property. Our facility includes nature trails, a swimming pool, archery, beach volleyball, play structures, and an outdoor sports court!

The Summer Adventure Camp offers a wide variety of activities and experiences including:

- Swimming
- Arts and Crafts
- Outdoor Sports
- Games
- Nature Walks
- Story-telling Workshops
- Science and Technology Projects
- Field Trips

CCC SUMMER CAMP IS ALMOST HERE!

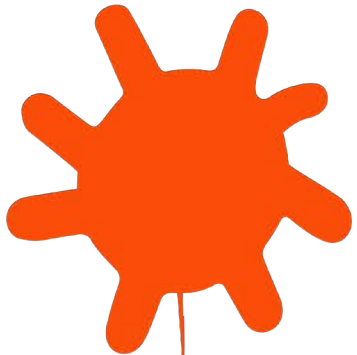
For more information please visit www.cccsummercamp.org
or call Tiffany Baffi-Munson, Summer Camp Director
(914) 242-0520 ext 302

Thank you, we're looking forward to another incredible summer!

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MISSION STATEMENT

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Country Childrens Center Fall Fest-a-thon 2021

By Shanna Krizan

Our first ever CCC Fall Fest-a-thon took place on Sunday, October 24th at FDR State Park in Yorktown Heights. It is the first time we have held our annual fall festival as a fundraiser, and in conjunction with a walkathon. We've long wanted to host a Walkathon, and raise not only funds for our center, but also to raise awareness to the importance of high-quality childcare.

Our first annual CCC "Fall Fest-a-thon" fundraiser was a huge success, raising approximately \$18,000! Lots of fun was had by families and staff spreading across all 6 of our preschool sites, and from our school-age sites! It was a beautiful thing to see everyone coming together safely in person, after a year and a half of being separated, and unable to hold such events....we are one big CCC community and to see and feel all the support

for our center was awe-inspiring! We are beyond grateful to our families, and to all of our amazing staff and their families who came out to volunteer. Thanks to everyone for such a fun and successful event and for supporting the high-quality programming you've become accustomed to. We look forward to hosting more events soon... and to having you be a part of them!



On the right: CCC families at the 2021 Fall Fest-a-thon.

CCC Site Update:

Oak Ridge



By Rebecca Zibell
Oak Ridge Site Director

Our Oak Ridge location was built with the community in mind. As the newest site for Country Children's Center, it is located in the Oak Ridge Shopping Center with various stores in its surrounding area. We are lucky to be within walking distance from so much, as it gives the children an opportunity to witness the world from the windows of their classrooms. This past year has brought many changes to the young lives that we care for, and we are always trying to think of ways to safely bring back celebrations into our center. For Halloween, we wanted everyone to experience the fun of the holiday by dressing up and trick or treating! We brainstormed ideas on how to best utilize the space that we have to create a fun and exciting day that the children would enjoy. To connect with people in our community, we came up with the idea of a trick or treat parade that would take place throughout the shopping center. We reached out to seven businesses within the shopping center, asking permission to stop at their doors.

As always, the families in our center came together to make the day special for each child. Donations of candy and small toys were made, allowing us to fill the bowls that we went on to hand out to each business. On October 29th, the day of our parade, so many parents and grandparents took the time to celebrate and lend a helpful hand as we gathered all the children to start the parade. Our entire center lined up to show off their costumes as we walked together to each stop. It was wonderful to see the group of almost fifty people making their way through the shopping center. We feel lucky to share the joy in these moments with the children in our center while also being able to involve the community at the same time!



On the right: Students and activities at Oak Ridge.

Family Event!



COUNTRY CHILDRENS CENTER POLAR EXPRESS HOLIDAY CELEBRATION MARKS 25 YEARS!

The Country Childrens Center annual Polar Express holiday event is marked it's 25th anniversary on December 8, 9 and 10. The event brought seasonal magic complete with a team of two beautiful reindeer - to delight more than 200 children from the area!

In addition to the visiting live reindeer, other highlights of the three-day event include a visit from Santa, photos with Frosty, and Executive Director, Polly Peace donning her nightgown and granny glasses and reading the book, The Polar Express by Chris Van Allsburg, to the children, while they sit inside the lavishly decorated science barn which has been transformed into the North Pole!

The CCC is glad to bring this joy and magic to children during this time of year!



On the right: CCC students at the Polar Express event.

CCC Site Update:

Bedford Hills



Double Duty at Bedford Hills

By Alex Redmond
Interim Site Director

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to report to yourself at work? Well, this new year I have been able to possess the unique experience of both working in the classroom as a head teacher as well as directing the site at Bedford Hills. My name is Alex Redmond, and I am the Head PreK teacher and Site Director at the Bedford Hills Country Childrens Center.

This year I experienced a whole lot of firsts – such as my new position as head teacher. I had been an assistant teacher for nine years in various preschools, but following my graduation from Mercy College, where I received my master's in early childhood, childhood, and special education, I applied for head teacher rolls around Westchester. As soon as I walked into the building at Bedford Hills, I knew that this was the place where I wanted to teach. The environment being so warm, the students exploring the world around them, and the staff all greeting me with a smile (even though it was behind a mask) were just some of my observations that told me that I picked the right place to teach. As the school year started, I had some trouble adjusting to the transition from assistant teacher to head teacher,

but my wonderful colleagues were so supportive and willing to help me in any way that they could.

Jumping forward to the new year – I am asked to become the interim director of the site. I knew that this would be an opportunity that does not present itself many times in one's life, so I excitedly accepted the position. This too, much like the head teacher position, had its adjustments to be made. It would mean that I would not only have to lead my classroom, but also support the other classes around me. With a lot of help from the other directors at the Country Childrens Center, a wonderful staff (who were extremely patient with me while I learned the ins and outs of my new roll), and support from a community of families (who continue to cheer me on), I have found myself a work home that would make anyone jealous.

So, as we remember that our lives are full of firsts – some of us getting new jobs, some adding to our wonderful families, and some just starting a new family – we can be confident that the community we have built at the Country Childrens Center will be there to support us in whatever way we need.



On the right: Students and activities at Bedford Hills.

CCC Site Update:

The Farm



Spreading Kindness at the Farm

By Noreen Cotter
The Farm Site Director

"Kindness is sharing the best parts of our hearts with those around us"- Random Acts of Kindness Foundation. As summer began to fade and fall came knocking, here at the Farm we began to look forward to another school year and the many ways we could show kindness.

Halloween time at the Farm was celebrated with classics such as pumpkins and costumes, but we also incorporated a large trunk-or-treating collaboration into the festivities, which was enjoyed by staff and our wonderful Farm families! Those who could decorated their trunks, while others donated lots of special treats and goodies to share. The children (and adults!) had a blast sharing the special experience.

For Veteran's Day, we spoke about the kindness and care that our veterans have shown us all by keeping us safe. To show just how thankful we are for their service, each of the classrooms made cards for our veterans. We made a list of words to share with the

veterans about just how much we appreciate what they do for us, using words like "thank you", "family", "respect", and "love".

As Thanksgiving approaches, we are reminded of just how blessed we are and that others may not be as fortunate. Many of us are looking forward to sharing yummy foods with our family and friends, but some people in our community may not have the ability to create such a feast. As such, we have started a Thanksgiving donation drive at the Farm to be donated to local community centers so that those in need are able to celebrate with their friends and family, as well.

Looking ahead to the upcoming Holiday season, we are busy brainstorming other ways to share the best parts of our hearts with those around us, opening the door to the kindness in us all.



On the right: Students and activities at the Farm.

CCC Site Update:

Kitchawan



By Caroline Paterno
Kitchawan Site Director

I have been an employee of The Country Children's Center since 2005. Sixteen years ago, while finishing my masters in education, I took a job as a Pre-k teacher at the CCC White House in Katonah. Who would have guessed it would be the start of my early childhood career. Staring as a pre-k teacher, and later becoming director, I have enjoyed all aspects of my time here and will continue to do so.

In 2009, when the CCC Kitchawan location opened, I moved from the White House to the new Kitchawan building. This was a new experience for me, as I was going to have infant and toddler classes under my supervision. Kitchawan opened with a wonderful group of teachers who got this place up and running, and I am happy to say that we continue to have a great group of teachers working here. We have recently hired a new lead teacher, and while change can be difficult, it can also result in some amazing things.

"My name is Elisa Goldman. I have been teaching for 30 years. I have my BA from Brandeis University and my Masters in Early Childhood education from Lehman College. I live in Cortlandt Manor with my husband and our 3 year

old cat, Misha. My daughter is 23 and a grad student at SUNY Stonybrook studying to be an Occupational Therapist. My son is 19 and a sophomore at Gettysburg College. In my free time I love spending time with my family and friends, drinking coffee, walking, cooking, binge watching shows and shopping online. I am very excited to be part of the Country Children's Center Kitchawan family."

As you can see, Elisa is very excited to join the Kitchawan team. All of us here are thrilled to have such an experienced teacher. Please make sure to say hi and introduce yourself if you happen to see her around!



On the right: Students and activities at Kitchawan.

CCC Site Update:

Watson



Change

By Kristen Pollock
Watson Site Director

As the seasons changed from Spring to Summer and from Summer to Autumn, I was reminded that not all change has to feel negative. Like the rest of the world, Watson (IBM and CCC) has also gone through challenging times during this pandemic. With all of the changes we have had to endure – with ever changing COVID guidelines, rules, expectations, etc. – the one great constant is the children and what new world they are eager to learn about. We have experienced some unfavorable changes, as teachers and staff have moved on to pursue other interests, and children have moved onto other schools; however, change can also be a good thing.

In facing the whole COVID crisis, we have come out on the other side with a little more patience, understanding, forgiveness, and acceptance of others. We have seen some wonderful changes here at Watson due to the integration of amazing new staff. I would like to welcome Ms. Julie and Ms. Cassie to our toddler teaching team. Cassie brings her love of play and the outdoors to the toddler room, and Ms. Julie brings her impressive ability to multitask, as she is a mom of triplets. Ms. Julie

enjoys working on art projects with the children, as well being surrounded by the constant curiosity and endless cuddles from the toddlers. Next, I would like to introduce Ms. Anna as our new preschool teacher. Ms Anna's sweet disposition and knowledge of how young children learn is a great addition to our Watson family. I now want to introduce Ms. Joy, our new prek teacher, who brings her love of literature and reading to the CCC. I would also like to introduce Ms. Leara who is our WCC intern and Ms. Aaliyah, our local high school student. Ms. Leara is currently studying early education at WCC and will be transferring to SUNY New Paltz next September. She is enjoying using her new skills in educating young children in the classroom. Ms. Aaliyah loves coming to work every day, as she enjoys laughing and coloring with the children. The new teachers and staff have blended so nicely with our seasoned staff: Ms. Linnette (infants), Ms. Kathleen (infant and toddlers), Ms. Tricia (floater), and Ms. Manjit (preschool/ prek). It is a joy to see the new and seasoned teachers from different places, life experiences, and careers to come together for one main purpose – to love and care for your children.



On the right: Students and activities at Watson.

CCC Site Update:

The White House



Celebrating Community and Family Engagement!

By Pam Belmonte

The White House Site Director

Welcome to the 2021 school year at the White House! Even though we had a very challenging 2020, the team of teachers at the White House created the best classroom environments and despite being amidst a pandemic with all the new protocols, they never missed a beat! As the school year progressed and limitations were lifted, we were excited to resume our Prek graduation celebration in-person and ended the school year with a sense of normalcy.

Presently, even though some restrictions still apply, the White House preschool and prek classes are off to a great start, enjoying many fall events. Since all of us at the White House love fun, family events, in September we celebrated our first CCC Spirit Day and will continue on the last Friday of every month throughout the year. During the day we have special CCC activities plus everyone has to wear orange and blue or their CCC T-shirts to school. Future Spirit Day events will be making CCC T-shirts and voting on a CCC mascot! Both classes are still enjoying weekly specials virtually like Music with Kenny and Story Time with our JJHS student, Miss Kacie but we can't wait until they can join us in-person once again. In October we had a blast with our Halloween

Happenings outdoor event! There was a scavenger hunt on Chipmunk Trail, tons of games like ghost and pumpkin corn hole, the witch hat ring toss and BOO-bowling on the sport court plus to end our festivities, the children enjoyed trunk or treating to the teacher's cars!! Since the holidays are approaching and we love family engagement, during the month of November the families are participating in our annual Turkey in Disguise project - Tom Turkey needs a disguise so Farmer Brown can't find him on Thanksgiving Day! Families are also sending in their family favorite holiday recipes so we can create a White House Holiday Cookbook and I must say we have some yummy holiday dishes so far. In December, we will sponsor a food drive for the Northern Westchester Community Center and participate in their "Share the Warmth" program to provide new pajamas, hats/gloves and blankets to families in need.

A huge thank you to all the staff at the White House for being my heroes over the past year! Together with the Prek Team of Evelyn Muñoz-Moreno and Teresa Stefankoski, The Preschool Team of Melissa Schuberg and Caitlin Buetti and the School Age staff led by Tiffany Baffi-Munson, we are White House strong!!



On the right: Students and activities at the White House.

CCC Program Update: School Age



School Age Happenings

By Tiffany Baffi-Munson
School Age Director

STEM education has emerged and it's growing, and we are embracing it to its fullest in our school age program! It is one of the best ways to inspire a love of science and innovative learning in our children. At its core, STEM concepts help children develop new ways of thinking, encourage curiosity and analysis, and our school age programs are doing just that!

At our Lewisboro Elementary School, Jamal Eissa is igniting student's imagination with 3D printing. During their first few months, they discovered the wonders of 3D Printing. Students were introduced to the world of Computational Literacy and Computer Aided Designing (CAD) through the one way in which they interact with each other: toys. The children at this site were given the opportunity to explore the process of brainstorming a creation and following it through, all the way to the final product. Through this process, the students have engaged using other curriculum connections. Some students were interested in the Math and Art aspect where they used geometry, primitive shapes, and measurement to create designs on an iPad (using the application Tinker CAD). Finally, throughout the experience, the students were given the chance to understand the iterative process of prototyping,

practicing collaboration, learning persistence with problem-solving, and gaining a view to the future!

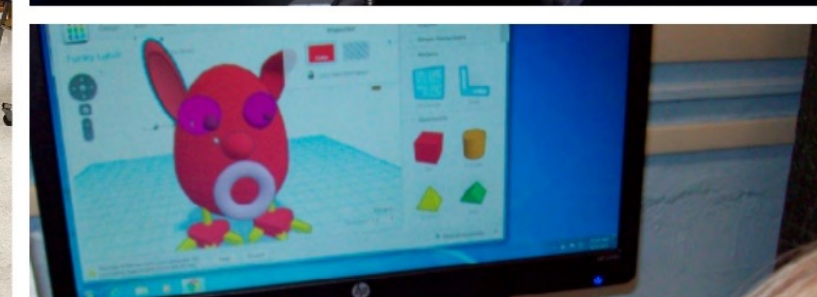
Over at the Katonah Elementary School After School Program, led by Risa D'Amaso, the children are preparing for their Destination Imagination Tournament. Destination Imagination is creative problem solving on a competitive level! All done with no outside interference, so only the kids on the teams can say how their challenge is solved! The CCC kids are writing a story about a trickster character, creating a costume that transforms, and an illusion! They will present their solution to the Challenge in the form of a skit on April 2 in Binghamton, NY!

For more information, please visit
<https://www.nydi.org/>

Finally, Pat Krugman at our Pound Ridge program has been teaching children to create some great items with knitting which include hats and ornaments! For those that like to be puzzled by puzzles, they are taking on the challenge of working collaboratively to solve some pretty involved puzzles!

The children at CCC are constantly growing, thinking and being innovative, even when schools out!

On the right: Students and activities at the School Age program.



In the Spotlight with CCC Oak Ridge Site Director Rebecca Zibell

By Nicole Davis
Editor

Rebecca Zibell began working at the Country Childrens Center in December of 2018, just before the doors of the Oak Ridge location opened in January of 2019. She began as the Lead Infant Teacher, and then spent July, August, and September of 2021 as Lead Preschool Teacher. At the end of September, she stepped into the role of Site Director.

Though Rebecca briefly considered a career as an architect, her true calling has always been in teaching, leading her to pursue a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education at Central Connecticut State University in 2013.

She grew up in Sherman Connecticut with her parents and 4 siblings and currently lives in Ridgefield Connecticut with her husband Mike, along with their German Shepherd, Winnie.

Rebecca's passion for education and childcare was cultivated at a young age, as her mother, who has a degree in special education, ran a home day care while Rebecca and her siblings were at school. Upon returning home from school, Rebecca would rush into the house in an effort to spend as much time as possible with the babies and toddlers who awaited pick-up. At the age of eleven, she began working as a mother's helper and continued to babysit and nanny throughout her twenties.



Rebecca also credits her large family for fostering her love of children and teaching. She is grateful to the many caring teachers who impacted her in meaningful ways through her k-8 school years, and she always hoped to be that person for someone one day.

What were your initial thoughts when you were asked to be site director?

I was excited and honored to be chosen for the role. I also was very nervous about the dynamic going from a teacher to the "boss" and how that would affect my relationship with my coworkers. I worried about that for a few days, but my staff is amazing and welcoming. They have been so patient as I learned the new role and just overall supportive of me.

What were some of the first actions you took when you assumed this role?

First, I wanted the staff to know that I was there to support them and give them a leader to rely on. For parents, I made sure that I communicated daily through Tadpoles about what was happening in the center. With the support of Polly and Carmelina, we worked to get a qualified Pre-K teacher in as well that would take on the role as the lead in that classroom.

Have you found your experience as a teacher helpful within your new position?

My experience in the classroom has helped tremendously. I started in childcare in 2014 in a Montessori School in Illinois. I then moved back to Connecticut and worked at a center in New Fairfield in the infant and toddler room. I took on an assistant director/teacher position there and learned so much. Being in the classroom all day taught me so much about interacting with parents, what licensing rules we need to follow, and how to manage a classroom. All the little details that come together to make a center run well.

What do you miss about being in the classroom all day?

I miss being creative with the children and coming up with dramatic play centers, sensory tables, etc. I love shopping at the dollar tree for all the holidays, seasons, etc. I find myself there wanting to buy all the fun things. Luckily enough for me though, I can pop into any of the four classrooms and join in with all the awesome projects that the teachers have planned.

What is something that you have learned about yourself after working with kids for so long?

Whenever I am having a stressful or hectic day, I remind myself to step back and get down on the kids' level and listen to their conversations or join in on their play. No matter the age group, they always will bring joy just by spending time with them. All it takes is a sweet smile from one of the infants, a running hug from a toddler, or getting down on the floor and building blocks with the preschool and pre-k kids. I have learned that children truly can help turn any day around.

I'm sure this job can get quite hectic, what do you do to take care of yourself when you feel overwhelmed?

The days can be hectic but also full of so much fun! I try to make sure I take a moment out of my day, even if it is for 30 minutes to eat my lunch and just take a breather. Luckily, our site is in a great spot with a pretty place to take a walk and get some fresh air. At home, I also love to read and do jigsaw puzzles. The Ridgefield Library is one of my favorite places and I am always on the hunt for a great book.

Has managing a CCC site changed the way you might view or approach teaching?

Managing Oak Ridge has made me appreciate the role the teachers have and how important it is to have great staff. Now that I am sitting on the other side of the desk, I am thankful for my years of teaching allowing me to relate to my staff. I want to create a supportive environment for my staff because I know how important it is to feel valued in their role.



SAVE THE DATE

COUNTRY CHILDRENS CENTER 2022 GOLF EVENT

Monday, July 18, 2022 at 11:00am

Mahopac Golf Club
601 N Lake Blvd, Mahopac, NY 10541

Event Includes: Golf, Lunch,
Dinner, Raffles, Auction, and Awards

Proceeds support the
CCC Scholarship Fund

**Call Shanna Krizan at
914-242-0520 ext. 702
to reserve a spot to this event.**

For more information and sponsorship
opportunities call 914-242-0520 ext. 510

COUNTRY CHILDRENS CENTER Tree Donation Program



Please help keep our
programs growing strong!

- For every \$100 donation a leaf will be placed on our CCC giving tree at our new Oak Ridge site. Your name will be written on the leaf for posterity.
- For donations of \$500-\$1,000 a new branch will be added to our tree with your name inscribed on it.

Please use the donation form included below to make your donations towards our Center and special programs, or **donate Online at** www.countrychildrenscenter.org

Thank you from the Board of Directors,
Staff, and children of the Country
Childrens Center.

THE COUNTRY CHILDREN CENTER — DONOR CARD

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