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September 6, 2016

Dear Families,

We hope you had a terrific holiday weekend with your families. We imagine you got out to the park, had a bbq or spent some quality time just hanging out together. Around here we had some down time as well but also installed new sinks in the Owl classroom and painted the Gecko and Owl classrooms. We also painted the office and Mountain Lion room last weekend. Next weekend we hope to paint in the kitchen. We will then take break before getting to other classrooms in a few months. If only we could somehow teach the kids to paint the walls when we want them to instead of when our backs are turned!

Will you join us on Tuesday, September 13th at 6:30 to learn fun brain games you can play with your children? Enrique Feldman, of Fostering Arts – Mind Education Foundation, will work with our children and teachers in the Owl, Gecko, Coyote and Roadrunner classes over the next several months. Please join us on the 13th to learn some fun and simple things to do with your children that will stimulate brain growth and laughter!

As we announced back in July, our rates are increasing this week. Private pay families will see tuition increased by \$5 this week. Additionally, our annual registration, supply and insurance fee of \$30 is billed this week. This helps us pay for additional start of the year expenses and supplies. DES does not cover this fee – each family is responsible for paying this.

Some of you are aware that a very generous community member, Karin Elliot, runs a food backpack program for Outer Limits children who need extra nutrition on the weekends. Karin does this through hard work and generosity and the generosity of community members, including some of our own parents and staff that donate time, food and money to help Karin provide 20 children with extra food on the weekends. We currently have a few spots available for families who would like to participate. Please ask for a sign up form in the office if you are interested. This is on a first come, first serve basis. Thank you.

Thank you to those of you who returned the Getting to Know You – Best of Care Form and the Ages & Stages Questionnaire we passed out last month. We would like to get these returned for all infants, toddlers and preschool children. Let us know if you need a blank copy. Thank you.

Do you eat dinner with your family at least 4 nights per week? Research shows time and again that eating together has tremendous benefits. Please read the following passage taken from WebMD.

10 Benefits of Family Dinners

Toting up all the benefits of frequent family dinners:

- Everyone eats healthier meals.
- Kids are less likely to become overweight or obese.
- Kids more likely to stay away from cigarettes.
- They're less likely to drink alcohol.
- They won't likely try marijuana.
- They're less likely to use illicit drugs.
- Friends won't likely abuse prescription drugs.
- School grades will be better.
- You and your kids will talk more.
- You'll be more likely to hear about a serious problem.
- Kids will feel like you're proud of them.
- There will be less stress and tension at home.

10 Tips for Organizing Family Dinners

Don't let this mission feel daunting! Even the simplest meals -- like order-in pizza -- qualify as family dinners. The goal is to get everyone to the dinner table and to spend quality time together - not to force Mom into June Cleaver or Carol Brady mode. Here are tips on pulling it off:

- Set a goal. Twice a week, perhaps? Build from there.
- Keep it simple. Family meals don't have to be elaborate. Work salads and vegetables into meals. Focus on familiar favorites, like chili or frittatas.
- Be prepared. Keep ingredients for healthful meals on hand, including plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Keep healthy 'appetizers' on hand. Stock the kitchen with fresh fruits, nuts, and low-fat cheese -- stuff the kids can snack on after school, instead of chips.
- Get the family involved. Let kids help prepare meals and set the table.
- Use the crock pot. Put everything together before leaving for work in the morning. You'll come home to the delicious smell of a cooked meal.
- Pick up take-out, order pizza, or eat out. It still counts as quality time spent together.
- Avoid portion distortion. Keep serving sizes under control, whether you're at home or eating out.
- Make it enjoyable. Leave the serious discussions for another time. Family meals are for nourishment, comfort, and support.
- Set the mood. Play soothing music. Put flowers on the table. Light a candle. Create a relaxing environment.

Here's another hint -- no TV allowed, no phones answered! This is time for listening to each other, sharing the day's stories, and nurturing the family connection. You will be pleased with the results -- please try it out!

Thank you,

Minnie, Blanca, Debbie and Bill