

# CO-OP COMMUNITY NEWS

From the Parent Advisory Council  
of the North Seattle Community College  
Cooperative Preschool Program



November 2005

## DON'T WAIT FOR SUMMER!

BY DEBORAH WOOLLEY

Parent Educator, North Seattle Community College

November has arrived, bringing dark skies, days of uninterrupted rain, and twilight that seems to settle in around 4:30 p.m. You look down at your toddler and/or preschooler, restless and cranky – you and them, perhaps! – after hours indoors, and think longingly of those endless warm summer days when you could take them outside to burn off some of that energy and absorb the bright sunlight. . . You sigh, resigned to enduring those endless “indoor months” of kids underfoot and into everything, of having to create entertainment for them, and pick up toys, and mediate disputes . . .

But think again! You don't have to wait until the weather turns warm and the skies clear to go outside. We live in Seattle, remember? Unlike Michigan or Montana, not to mention Manitoba, ours is a temperate climate, and there is no reason we have to keep our kids indoors in fall and winter. Yes, it's true that playground equipment isn't much fun in rain – slides don't slide when wet, climbing structures are dangerous when slippery, lakes develop under swings. But maybe there's a problem if we automatically assume that “kids” plus “outside” equals “play equipment,” or that “park” equals “playground.” There's much more to “going outside”; and the days of fall, winter, and early spring provide an opportunity to help

our kids discover the pleasures, adventures, and discoveries that await us when we venture beyond the confines of the playground out into the surrounding woods, up onto a windy hill, or down to a beach in winter. Play equipment is safe, usually; it gives a chance to practice large motor skills. It's predictable and unchanging: it's always that same hard, primary-colored plastic or smooth wood-and-metal whatever the time of day, whatever the season. Think what a contrast that is with the natural world! In the woods, the ground beneath our feet changes as the seasons change: dry and hard in summer, soft and resilient with autumn leaves. The light among the trees changes with the seasons, as do the colors of leaves. Each time we walk, the experience is a little different. On the beach, the sand is one texture when wet, another when dry; the dull black and gray rocks turn shiny in the rain, often lined or spotted with color. The wind shifts and feels different on our face depending on whether we face into it or away from it. The natural world engages our senses with a variety and a richness that children don't experience indoors or when they're focused on playground equipment. There's so much to be learned about the world outside. We adults, having been around this world for a

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### 2005-2006 Calendar

#### November

- 17 PAC Lecture - Anne Green Gilbert  
7:00 - 8:30
- 19 First-Aid and CPR, 8:00-4:30
- 24-25 Thanksgiving (no school)

#### December

- 12 PAC Meeting
- 19-Jan.1 Winter Vacation (no school)

#### January

- 9 PAC Meeting
- 16 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
(no school)
- 18 Dealing with Disappointment class  
begins (see page 4)

#### February

- 13 PAC Meeting
- 20-24 Mid-Winter Break (no school)

#### March

- 13 PAC Meeting

#### April

- 10-14 Spring Break (no school)
- 17 PAC Meeting

#### May

- 22 PAC Meeting
- 26 Last Day of School

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long time, read and talk and sing to our children about the wind blowing cold, about the seasons changing, about mud squishing, about the smell of the salt air, without thinking that our children may have no idea what all this refers to – they may not have experienced these sensations yet. It's up to us to introduce them to these dimensions of being alive, and it's a joy to observe their fascination with these discoveries. As in child-directed play, when we can set aside our own goal-oriented agendas and our multitasking and watch our children exploring and discovering and inventing, these are times when we can be fully present with our children and experience the world along with them.

In The Geography of Childhood: Why Children Need Wild Places, Gary Paul Nabhan observes that because playgrounds "have become dominated by machinelike recreational equipment, structured games, and paved-over areas," the kind of play that happens in playgrounds is "domesticated and regimented." In the natural world beyond the playground, in contrast, children tend towards imaginative play. Nabhan notes that whereas adults think of nature in terms of scenic vistas and open spaces, children perceive nature as full of things – animal, vegetable, and mineral – which lend themselves to explorations and imaginative play. He cites a study by environmental psychologist Mary Ann Kirby in which she mapped the behavior of twenty-six preschoolers on a half-acre playground and found that they spent over half their time "acting out dramas under the cover of two densely vegetated areas on the margins of the playground" beneath birches, dogwoods, junipers, and Scotch broom. On walks at age six, my daughter would make 'fairy

houses' with her friends out of moss, twigs, and whatever else they could find. My son, at age two, transformed any stick into a tool and would explain to me its use. Unlike "toys," things found in nature come with no predetermined script and no instructions, so with a little prompting (or not) from mom or dad they become material for imaginative play or for invention.

Lastly, going outside on fall and winter walks provides a chance for shared experience. Most adults do not climb on the play equipment with their kids – they observe rather than share the experience; but when we walk through the woods or on the beach with our children, holding hands or walking together, it's a shared experience. We talk about what we see and smell and hear and sense; they talk to us about what they imagine; we're building language skills and conversational skills. And when children spend time exploring the natural world from a young age within the safety net of their parents' company, they begin to develop a comfort level with the varied, unpredictable natural world that helps solidify their sense of security. Kirby calls this "extending the sphere of safety" that children derive from parental presence.

If you're not convinced yet, here's one more argument: your own mental health will benefit from your spending time outside during these shorter, darker days of fall and winter. It doesn't require sunshine – the sun is out even if it's hidden! There's good evidence that as little as 45 minutes outside each day helps alleviate any tendency toward seasonal-affective disorder (SAD) or the winter blues. Fortunately, here in Seattle, we have easy access to "wild places." Thanks to the foresight of Seattle's early citizens who set aside a "green belt" of parks spread throughout the city, as

well as the fact that we're situated between Puget Sound and Lake Washington, woods and shorelines are nearby or a short drive away from almost any Seattle neighborhood. Two recent books that are invaluable sources of ideas for short walks or longer expeditions are Nature in the City, by Maria Dolan and Kathryn True (The Mountaineers, 2003), and Out and About with Kids, by Ann Bergman and Virginia Smyth (Sasquatch, 2005). When my kids were little I'd sit down on Sunday nights with my reference sources, find a description of a place that looked like it had potential, and get on the phone to find a friend with compatible kids to join us in our explorations. Here are a few of my favorite Seattle "wilderness" outings from those days.

\*\* Discovery Park loop trail – Park at the Visitor's Center, head out from the parking lot following the signs to the Loop Trail, take it counterclockwise (if you go clockwise, you start with a steep hill), heading through the "tunnel" (fun to yell in!) and as far as your child is inclined to go down the path.

NOTE: Discovery Park has naturalist-led activities year-round. Check inside the Visitor's Center.

\*\* Carkeek Park starting at the parking lot north of the Holman Road QFC and heading downhill into the woods. This trail will lead you into the park proper, but you may never make it that far! The path crosses Piper Creek numerous times on little bridges where you can watch the water and play "pooh sticks."

\*\* Arboretum, Foster's Island. Park at the start of the walk (near Broadmoor Golf Club) and head out onto the island. When you reach the end, get on the trail over the water. There are viewing platforms where you can look for ducks, boats, etc.

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\*\* Golden Gardens – park at the upper parking lot, walk through the tunnel under the railroad tracks emerging just south of the play area, walk north on paved trail to the duck pond at the far end, return via beach or paved path.

\*\* Gasworks Park – walk up the hill on a windy day to feel the wind and see the boats, dance on the sundial.

\*\* YURTS! Several of the state parks campgrounds have yurts which can be reserved for not much more than the cost of a campsite. With a concrete floor, bunk beds, electricity, and wood stoves, a yurt lets you “camp” off-season but in a warm and dry cabin-type structure. For several years when my kids were little, we packed up food and camping stove, sleeping bags, games and books, and spent Thanksgiving weekend in a yurt at Cape Disappointment State Park, alternating cozy time inside with cold windy walks exploring the beach, woods, nearby lighthouse, and forts.

Here are a few practical suggestions for fall and winter venturing outside:

- (1) Leave the stroller behind. The idea is to let your kids explore, and to go at their pace.
- (2) Abandon all goals regarding destination; the only necessity is to get back where you started from.
- (3) Set aside a block of time: a couple of hours at least. If you have to rush, you'll miss out on the calming effects of being outdoors.
- (4) If you have two kids with you, take another adult (with or without kids) so that you will be free to handle any emergencies that may arise. Find out which parents of kids you know enjoy doing this sort of thing, and build that relationship. Take turns selecting destinations.
- (5) Buy yourself some knee-high rubber boots so you can wade and

splash with abandon. Ditto for your child, of course.

(6) Travel with (in the car) towels for drying off afterwards, big grocery bags for muddy things, a potty seat for any toddlers being toilet-trained, dry clothes. In your pack: a towel, toilet paper, plastic bags, first aid supplies, water, snacks, and something to sit on (a tarp).

(7) Take a plastic bag for collecting things you find along the way – rocks, sticks, seed pods, leaves. Nurture the spirit of scientific inquiry in your kids by bringing home these “specimens,”

setting them out in a bowl or on a tray, and examining them from time to time for a few days afterwards.

(8) And /or turn your collected items into art projects– make playdough landscapes with twigs and berries and little sprigs of Douglas fir; put leaves between contact paper and hang them in the windows; make mosaics on cardboard with glue, rocks, small cones, seeds, etc. Peruse the shelves of a children's bookstore for other nature-craft ideas.

(9) Read books about the kinds of

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## Making Use of Community Resources

*By Irene Wagner, MSW, and Mary Hull, MSW Parent Educators at NSCC*

The years when we are raising young children are joyful and enriching, but can also be stressful and exhausting. Seeking the support of family and friends is very important. Community resources should also be used during times of family transition, stress, and crisis. Even healthy families experience stress and find it meaningful to seek community resources. We are fortunate to live in a city that offers a myriad of services. We have compiled the following information for families to use as a reference. We hope you will find this to be useful.

### Parent Stress Help Lines:

- Family Help Line (206) 233-0139
- Parents Without Partners (206) 517-2700 ([www.parentswithoutpartners.org](http://www.parentswithoutpartners.org))
- The Parental Stress Line (24 hours) 1-800-632-8188
- 24 Hour Crisis Line (206) 461-3222
- Domestic Violence Hotline (206) 522-9472 (New Beginnings Crisis Line)
- Family Services (206) 461-3883 ([www.family-services.org](http://www.family-services.org))
- Jewish Family Services (206) 461-3240 ([www.jfsseattle.org](http://www.jfsseattle.org))
- Lutheran Social Services 1-800-7721213
- Substance Abuse 24 Hour (206) 722-3700
- Child Care Referral Line (206) 329-1011
- Catholic Community Services (206) 322-3637
- Northwest Harvest (206) 625-0755
- Public Health Clinics (206) 296-4600
- Program for Early Parent Support (PEPS) (206) 547-8570, ext.10
- 45th Street Community Clinic (206) 633-3350
- Parent Support Groups (206) 282-4770
- UW Child Development Clinic (206) 685-1242
- Children's Resource Line (Children's Hospital) (206) 987-2500
- Mothers of Multiples (425) 739-9277
- Adoption - Tapestry Books 1-800-765-2367 ([www.tapestrybooks.com](http://www.tapestrybooks.com))

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environments you've been in on your fall/winter expeditions so you can remember and talk about what you experienced.

(10) Draw "maps" with your preschooler of where you went and what you saw there.

(11) Once you've had a chance to see what your children like to do in the outdoors, bring along props: a few Playmobile people to put in those "fairy houses," a couple pieces of rope to tie around trees, big pieces of cardboard boxes for roofs for forts, shovels and little flat sticks for dams and bridges, etc.

(12) Consider carrying a thermos of cocoa or hot (warm) apple cider and cups on your walks, and making it a regular ritual.

And then there's the experience of coming back indoors, feeling the contrast in temperature, enjoying the pleasures of being warm and dry, having a good snack and snuggling under a blanket. A friend of mine once confessed that her whole reason for backpacking was the pleasure of coming back home. Perhaps you or your child will feel as she did . . . but at least you'll have escaped "cabin fever" and had a few adventures outdoors this winter. 

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[northseattlecoops.org](http://northseattlecoops.org)

206.527.3783

(NSCC Parent Ed Office)

## Help Kids Deal With Disappointment

*Erin is wailing at the top of her lungs - her red balloon popped and she wants another.*

*Paul lies on the floor sobbing - the pajamas he wants to wear to bed are in the washer, soaking wet.*

*Alana stomps around the house and pokes fun at her siblings - she didn't get the part of princess in the school play.*

*Brian is so upset that he didn't get to go out for recess today that he is throwing all his toys on the floor.*

### Avoid Emotional Meltdowns!

Children need concrete strategies to cope with their feelings. The easiest time for children to learn to calm themselves is between 2 and 30 months, however it is never too late to begin.

- Discover two critical elements kids need to avoid emotional meltdowns.
- Understand why your child doesn't "cool-it" when you acknowledge her feelings.
- Identify six strategies you can teach your child to calm himself.
- Learn ways to keep your cool, when kids lose theirs.
- Find out four ways parents discount children's feelings and what to do instead.

**What:** A new program for parents designed to help 1-8 year-old children deal with their feelings constructively.

**Who:** **Elizabeth Crary** - author and parent educator for over 20 years.

**When:** Six Wednesdays: 1/18, 2/1, 2/15, 3/1, 3/22, 4/5, 7-9:30 pm.

**Where:** Near Northgate (<http://parentingpress.com/location>).

**Cost:** \$22.00, NSCC tuition for 2 credits

For information; Elizabeth Crary at (206) 367-6425; for info or to register call Bob at (206) 529-6029.

Size limited, pre-registration required: Call (206) 529-6029

### NSCC Co-op Preschool Openings for 2005-06\*

	Co-op	Openings	Contact	Phone
<b>Toddlers</b>	Northgate	13	Yoon Kang-O'Higgins	729-5918
<b>Pre-3s</b>	Northwest	6	Karla Gore	697-8294
<b>3-5s</b>	Crown Hill PM	2	Jennifer Chamberlin	782-5384
	Sandhurst	5	Katy Ryan	522-3680
	Victory Heights PM	6	Theresa Venice	306-8907
	Wallingford 3-4's	2	Wyly Astley	240-1656
	Wallingford 4-5's	1	Lisa Drake	632-9817
<b>Fives</b>	Meadowbrook	7	Debbie Fields	985-9446

**Web Link** To view current listings and for descriptions of each co-op, please go to our web site at: [northseattlecoops.org](http://northseattlecoops.org)  
\*current as of 11-18-05