Dear Families,

As we begin the new year in January, we start to plan for the new school year that will start August 31, 2020. We will provide information about tuition as well as the calendar so please keep an eye out for this communication near the end of January.

In February, we will be asking all families to let us know about any plans to leave before August or stay with us into the new school year. If you plan to withdraw before August, please be aware that if you are interested in future re-enrollment your child’s name will be placed on the wait list based on the date the withdrawal notification is submitted. The earlier you can tell us about a withdrawal the better. Our policy does require at least a 6 week written notice of withdrawal in order to receive a security deposit refund. Security deposit refunds will be returned within 60 days after leaving our program.

Notification of withdrawals allow us to plan when siblings of currently enrolled families can be offered a space. When I am notified that a child will be leaving I review information to determine if a space can become available for a younger child of a current family. To do this, I review the ages of children in the infant/toddler classrooms to see if anyone is old enough to transition to an older classroom. If so, I then consult with the teachers to find out if they know of any reason a child should not transition. The families of those children are also involved in this discussion. Once everyone is in agreement that a child is ready to transition to an older room, then a transition schedule is planned. I then notify current families of the opening based on their wait list application date to offer a space. If there isn’t a fit for a currently enrolled sibling, I refer to the wait list to fill the space. We do our best to allow for a 4-6 week advance notice for transition, however, sometimes life surprises families so we only have a week or two notice. I will work with families if timing is an issue. A typical time for mid-year transitions is at the end of UM semesters as well as June or July.

As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.
Sincerely,
Beth Ann

UM Towsley Children’s House Center Director
734-763-3400
bablanch@umich.edu
Winter Weather Policy for UM Children’s Centers

With winter weather soon upon us, we want to update you on closing policy for the U-M Towsley Children’s House. Given the very severe weather we experienced last year, the University has reviewed and revised policies about how the University will operate during extreme weather.

**Emergency Reduction in Operations.** The review confirmed that the University never totally “closes” due to the continuing need for services to patients, students, public safety and sensitive research projects. However, in the rare event of extreme winter weather, the administration may call for a “Reduction in Operations”. This status would be posted on the U-M home page and sent to any U-M faculty, staff or student who signs up for emergency alerts. ([http://spg.umich.edu/policy/201.27](http://spg.umich.edu/policy/201.27))

In the event of a reduction in operations, the Children’s Centers will only be open to those U-M staff and faculty who are considered “critical staff”. This status should be communicated to you by your unit/department director so that you are clearly informed of your expected attendance during a reduction in operations.

We ask that any parent who is deemed “critical” to their unit in the above circumstances please inform the front desk staff member of your center so that we can plan for staffing in the event of a “reduction in operations”. The Children’s Centers will staff each center so that we can care for children of critical staff members only.

The Centers will not be able to provide care to families who are not considered critical staff in the event of University-wide reduction in operations. Due to the emergency and extremely rare nature of such a partial closing, tuition will not be refunded for the day of care.

**Other severe winter weather policies.** In the event of severe winter weather that is treacherous but does not result in an official reduction in operations, the centers will be open, however, may need to delay opening until 10:00 am in order to assure adequate staffing to receive all children. Families will be notified of delayed openings the evening before, if at all possible, via email and a message on the primary phone line of each center. If conditions develop rapidly this notice may not go out until early in the morning. Families are encouraged to check for delayed openings by checking for e-mail messages or calling the center’s phone line for messages.

We do our best to continue provision of services to U-M faculty, staff and students throughout our snowy Michigan winters! We have put these exceptions in place to pro-

*** Lunch is NOT provided when the University declares Emergency Reduction in Operations. You must provide a lunch. (Reminder: No nuts or nut products)
As winter and cold weather approaches, children’s play is often limited to the indoors. Adult fears about safety and negative attitudes toward exposure to cold weather are the barriers that prevent children from accessing play in winter months. It is common to hear adults say that “my child will not like being in the cold weather,” or “the cold is too dangerous to play in,” or “there’s nothing to play with.” It is up to adults to focus on the importance of children’s play, regardless of the season. After all, play should not be restricted to warm weather. Let’s welcome this upcoming winter season with a playful attitude.

HOW SNOWY, COLD WEATHER BENEFITS CHILDREN’S DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH

When the weather drops into the single digits, it is common for parents to want their children to stay indoors to play. Before you go and curse the cold weather for keeping your playful children indoors all winter, let’s consider all of the benefits that cold weather has when it comes to children’s health, development, and well-being.

1. CHILDREN GET TO SEE THE OUTDOORS THROUGH A NEW LENS

During the summer months, children become used to the warm, green climate that the season has to offer. After the change in season or the first snowfall, children view their environment through a different lens: fallen leaves, brown grass, snow, ice. This new lens enables them to imagine the outdoors differently and to be creative and play in different ways.

2. INCREASES IN EXERCISE AND USING DIFFERENT MUSCLES

The winter months provide us with different ways of moving our bodies, such as sledding, walking up a snow hill, or building a snowman. Our larger muscles are put to great use in the winter months due to the challenges that snow provides. This large-muscle use and increase in physical activity support children’s gross motor development and overall health.
3. GETTING FRESH AIR AND AVOIDING BACTERIA
Most adults associate the winter months with getting colds and illnesses such as the flu. However, it is not the cold weather that necessarily causes colds and flus – it is increased exposure to indoor environments where bacteria and viruses live. For example, during the winter months, you turn on your home’s heating and venting systems. The bacteria and viruses within your home are continuously being moved around inside. Adults and children who spend long periods of time in a heated and poorly ventilated home, without exposure to fresh air, can easily pass germs to each other.

4. NEW CHALLENGES AND PROBLEM-SOLVING
Weather that we consider “messy” provides environments and materials that are inspiring and fun for children; for example, patches of ice, large snow hills, and trees covered in snow. These environments provide children with opportunities for new challenges, such as sliding down the ice patch and climbing a snow hill. Engagement with outdoor environments in the winter provokes new problem-solving skills – “How can I slide down this ice patch without falling?” “How fast can I run up this snow hill?” “Can I climb this tree using a branch as a snow pick?” The ever-changing environments that the winter months have to offer provide children with the challenges that they so often crave.

5. VITAMIN D EXPOSURE
When we stay indoors during the winter, we are not only missing out on play, but also on necessary vitamins that the outdoor environment gives us. Children get vitamin D through sun exposure, and absorb it even though the sun is not as warm in the winter. Vitamin D helps regulate mental and emotional moods, doing so by increasing serotonin levels in the brain. Serotonin plays an important role in
Five Outdoor Winter Activities

1. Shoveling Snow

Simple ideas are sometimes the best. Nothing inspires children like a “work project,” and snow can provide a wonderful outlet for extra energy. Shovel paths in the yard, or even a whole area of the yard so you can play a game. All you need are some sturdy child-sized shovels and enthusiasm. Add a wheelbarrow or wagon for hauling, and you’ll have a wealth of cooperative and imaginative play!

2. Learn About Snowflakes

A life-long love of nature can start with something as simple as observing snowflakes. Catch falling flakes on black paper and study them with a magnifying glass (hint: Cold paper helps flakes last better, so keep some in the freezer ready for a snowfall). Learn about Wilson Bentley, the famous photographer of snowflakes (try Snowflake Bentley, by Jacqueline Briggs Martin). Or children may enjoy making their own out of coffee filters.

3. Nature Walk

The natural world of winter is amazing when observed with all the senses. Talk with the children about what they might see, hear, feel, smell, or taste in winter. Then, on your nature walk, ask them to point out interesting nature objects or phenomena. When you get back inside make a list of the things you noticed. Make pictures or find out more from books.

- Sights: Shapes of snow drifts, colors in the snow (you’d be amazed!)
- Sounds: Sound of the whistling wind, the quiet of the snow falling, roar of a snowplow
- Feel: The downy touch of snowflakes, soft (or spiky) pine needles or the rough bark of a tree
- Smell: Fresh-cut pine, wood smoke, cocoa!

4. Tracking

Teaching environmental responsibility and a love for the natural world starts very young. Identifying and following animal tracks in fresh snow is a great way to teach children the skills of scientific observation as well as providing a positive incentive to get outside when the snow might not be deep enough for other activities. Without needing any materials, following tracks can be as exciting as a game of hide-and-seek or playing detective! Which animals are active in your location during the winter months? You may be surprised at what you discover.

5. Winter Scavenger Hunt

Make colored ice cubes by adding a few drops of food coloring to water. Hide them around the play yard and let the children hunt for them.

Adapted from Community Playthings: Ten Outdoor Winter Activities

Click here to see full article.
GREAT SLEDDING HILLS

Ann Arbor is home of hidden gems—great sledding hills! This winter, bundle everyone up and take your sled to some great locations.

**Big Hills:**
- Huron Hills Golf Course (3465 E. Huron River Drive)
- Rolling Hills County Park (7660 Stony Creek Road)
- Veteran’s Memorial Park (Maple Road)
- Slauson Middle School field (Crest Street)
- Hunt Park (Sunset between Spring and Daniel)
- Burns Park (between Granger and Wells)
- County Farm Park (Platt Road)
- Leslie Park (Dhu Varren)
- Riverside Park (Ypsilanti –Depot Town)

**Bunny Hills:**
- Crary Park (Washtenaw at Cambridge)
- Mushroom Park (Between Waltham and Saxon)

Get Cozy and Read: Winter Book Suggestions
As the fall semester came to a close, we said good-bye to our Fall Psychology 307 students. The University of Michigan students had the opportunity for direct interactions with young children and teachers during classroom placements. Students also participated in a seminar component where they completed written assignments, reflected on classroom experiences and discussed a number of early childhood topics including, but not limited to: quality care, play, problem solving, pro-social behavior, ECE policy and a variety of other topics. In January, we are welcoming a new group of Psych 307 students to Towsley.

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**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Professional development days are vital to the quality of care we are able to provide for children. Staff needs dedicated time, without children present, where everyone can discuss and receive trainings on relevant early childhood topics. This time also allows us to build community among staff.

This Fall we participated in the third part of a Hanen training that focused around building children’s social, language and early literacy skills.

January trainings will focus on diversity. Friday, January 3 staff will be viewing and reflecting on the film *Me, the Other*. Monday, January 20th, staff will participate in the University’s MLK Day events on campus. We will attend the keynote address at Hill Auditorium and have a training on Storytelling for Diverse Learners.

**EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY STUDENT TEACHERS**

Winter semester we will be welcoming EMU Student Teachers to Towsley Children’s House. The student teachers are completing their degree at Eastern Michigan in Early Childhood Education. As part of their training and certification, student teachers spend time in classrooms under the supervision of an experienced mentor teacher.

The experience is similar to other professionals in medicine, law and architecture where students have opportunities for internships that allow them to apply their academic knowledge to real world experiences. Student teachers have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills and values of the teaching learning process where ideas can be performed and tested. We hope each candidate has an enriching experience that they can take away a new appreciation and understanding of the teaching profession.
WHO’S WHO AT TOWSLEY CHILDREN’S HOUSE

**Infant/Toddler Classrooms**
*Seedling*: Erin Goatley, Leslie Thompson, and Sheila Hall
*Sprouts*: Kim Hull, Sandra Canales, and Ciara Sego
*Sassafras*: Sonja Whitehouse, Raana Aminlari, Samantha Huff, and Hollyn Formosa
*Magnolia*: Angelique Rudolph, Emily White, Darius Cobb, and Megan Brown

**Preschool Classrooms**
*Willow*: Serena Simmons, Jessica Polonchan, and Asmaa Naser
*Birch*: Jodi Sarkella, Derek Whitten, and Ashley Christensen
*Oak*: Heather Cole, Stephanie Sczomak, and Karen Ong
*Sycamore*: Kellie Chestler-Root, Amanda Matthews, and Amber Bruckner
*Maple*: Christian Boyer, Kacie Sitts, and Kamaria Hayes
*Evergreen*: Elizabeth Powers, Clara Aldrich, and Candace Pankey

**Support Staff**
*Beth Ann Blanchard*: Center Director
*Jasmine Boster*: Program Director and Psych. 307 Instructor
*Cathy Hendrix*: Administrative Assistant
*Katie Meyer*: Resource Teacher
*Korinn Kulinski*: Resource Teacher
*Denise Pelky*: Program Teacher
*Clara Younglove*: Program Associate Teacher
*Andrew Moeller*: Program Associate Teacher
*Mary McCarthy*: Program Associate Teacher
*Sarah Mauck*: Program Associate Teacher
REvised

CLOSED – Labor Day Holiday............................................Monday, September 2
First Official Day of School.............................................Tuesday, September 3
Center wide Fall Picnic .................................................Wednesday, October 2
October.................................................................Parent Teacher Conferences throughout month
CLOSED UM Fall Break - Center Planning.........................Mon. & Tues. October 14-15
CLOSED - Thanksgiving Holiday .................................Thursday & Friday, Nov. 28-29
Last Day for Children (before Winter break)..................Friday, December 20
CLOSED Staff Professional Development......................Thursday & Friday, January 2-3

THE CENTER WILL BE CLOSED FROM
MONDAY, DECEMBER 23RD THROUGH FRIDAY, JANUARY 3RD
PLEASE ARRANGE ALTERNATE CHILDCARE FOR THIS TIME.

Children Return from Winter break ............................................Monday, January 6
CLOSED - Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Professional Development)......Monday, January 20
CLOSED TO CHILDREN (Professional Development) .....................Monday, March 2
March...............................................................Parent Teacher Conferences throughout month

CLOSED - Memorial Day Holiday.............................................Monday, May 25
Center wide Spring picnic ................................................Tuesday, June 2
CLOSED - Independence Day Holiday.....................................Friday, July 3
CLOSED - Natural Start Conference .......................................July 29 – 31st
Last day of 2019-2020 school year .......................................Tuesday, August 25th
CENTER CLOSED.........................................................August 26-28

First day of 2020-2021 School year .........................................Monday, August 31st
CLOSED - Labor Day Holiday.............................................Monday, September 7