



# Just Janie's News!

## DECEMBER 2011



It's the most wonderful time of the year, to coin a phrase from a popular holiday song. The colors of the season are brilliant, there is a spirit of giving in our hearts, cinnamon and baked cookie smells tickle our noses and children are trying to be on their best behavior because "he sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake, he knows if you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake!" This can be a very busy and stressful time of year, as well. Don't try to overload the children with a new project every single day. The craft idea included on page four of this newsletter could actually be stretched out over three days, as well as the cooking activity on the back page. Let the children help you make a red, green and yellow paper chain that is 31 links long. Hang the chain by your circle time and calendar area. Choose one child each day to break one link in the countdown to Christmas and the new year. Introduce other seasonal holidays to the children such as Hanukkah and Kwanza or look at holiday celebrations around the world. Read quiet holiday stories to the children as they lay down for their naps with soft Christmas carols playing. Be sure to take the children outside daily for fresh air and sunshine. You could look for fresh pine boughs or cedar limbs to bring inside to decorate and help your room smell seasonal. Add some pine cones to your sensory and science areas. Most importantly, breathe, relax and celebrate the joy and wonder of this time of year through the eyes of the children. Have a blessed Christmas, holiday season and New Year!

### 2011 Technical Assistance Plans/Goals

**December** This is a month full of excitement, wonderful smells and colors. I am going to create seasonal sensory tubs to demonstrate for you and the children, ginger bread play dough, as well as literacy and finger play activities. 'Tis the season...fa-la-la-la-la!

**January** I will focus on each center individually from the classroom LAP/ELAP reports and model some activities to focus on domains that generally scored low. This means I may be working on fine motor skill activity ideas with some of you, pre-writing skills with some on you, or language skills.

**February** Remember those literacy environment checklists we did about this time last year? Well, I'm going to bring them back in to your center and look at all the wonderful changes and upgrades you have made and make some suggestions for you. Let's share some great ideas together and make literacy a focal point for all the age groups at your center/site.





## Updates, Information and Important Things to Know!



### DECEMBER 2011

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

### DECEMBER EVENTS

**December 6** Workshop “Fla. Early Learning & Development Standards for Four Year Olds”

**December 8** Workshop “Fitness Fun”

**December 23** Coalition Office Closed for Christmas Holiday

**December 25** MERRY CHRISTMAS!

**December 26** Coalition Office Closed for Christmas Holiday

### DECEMBER WORKSHOP INFORMATION

**Florida Early Learning & Development Standards for Four Year Olds (FOR LEAD VPK TEACHERS ONLY AT THIS TIME!).** Presented by Melissa Brady, VPK Coordinator

**DATE:** Tuesday, December 6, 2011 **TIME:** 6:00-9:00 PM (3 hours)

**LOCATION:** Columbia County School Board SOS Building Room 130

This is a DOE approved training and you must register at [www.myflorida.com/childcare](http://www.myflorida.com/childcare), click on Child Care Main Page, click on View Transcript, enter last name, SSN or Student ID, verify info is correct and click on “Continue”. At your DCF transcript, click on the BLUE BUBBLE “Click to Register for Courses”, click on “Instructor Led Course”, change county to COLUMBIA, skip down to “Course Reference Number, enter 1476 then click on “Find”. Complete the registration process.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER IS WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2011 AT 5:00 P.M.**

For more information go to [www.elc-fg.org](http://www.elc-fg.org) and click on “EVENTS”.

**FITNESS FUN!** Presented by Jenn Faber, State School-Age Services Coordinator.

**DATE:** Thursday, December 8, 2011 **TIME:** 6:00-8:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** Columbia County School Board SOS Building Room 130

Calling all school-aged teachers! Join us for a night of some terrific fitness fun with Jenn through demonstrations and hands-on activities including modeling sensible snacks, promoting healthy habits and how to schedule moderate to vigorous physical activity for at least 30-60 minutes a day in your programs. Jenn is very energetic and will get you motivated to working with your school agers towards fitness fun!

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER IS THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1.** For more information and to register you must go to [www.elc-fg.org](http://www.elc-fg.org) and click on “EVENTS”.

### **BITS AND BITES JUST FOR DIRECTORS!**

These are difficult economic times we are living in. Everyone is having to think outside the box to keep their business afloat. The child care industry is no exception and many of you have seen a drop in attendance due to parents no longer working or able to afford child care. Subsidized child care funding has, for the last two years, fluctuated radically and will continue to do so as it is a government regulated agency that changes as the political environment changes. **You should not depend on subsidized child care to keep your business afloat!** Market your business to the private sector for a more stable enrollment. Below are some suggestions:

1. Any and all advertising, anywhere and at all times, must list your DCF license number. That is the law!
2. Look at your landscaping. What do people, in particular parents, see when they drive by your business? Do they see plants and flowers in neat beds or do they see broken toys all over the yard?
3. Look at your windows from a street perspective. When people drive by your business, do they see children's art work beautifully displayed in the windows or do they see lopsided window blinds or drooping curtains?
4. Signage. Is your business sign large, colorful and readable from the street? Again, it must show your DCF license number!
5. Garbage. Can people see your overflowing outside garbage bins from the street? Consider building a simple wooden enclosure with a swinging gate or door to keep critters and children out. Let the children paint the enclosure with colorful handprints for a pleasant display.
6. Inside environment. Get a camera, stand in your doorway on a normal day and take a picture. Develop and enlarge the picture to an 8x10 size. Look closely because this is what parents, visitors and children see when they open your door. First impressions are HUGE! What does your center smell like when you first come in the door? Breakfast-yummy! Dirty diapers-yucky! Are the floors clean? Are the rugs clean? Are the children's cubbies attractive? Are the play areas organized and inviting?
7. Playground. Is there nice ground covering (hay, mulch, grass) or just old, left over mulch scattered thinly over everything? Does your equipment look tired? All broken toys and equipment should be removed and not pushed into a corner or on the other side of a fence. Again, take a picture, develop it and look at it through a visitor or parent's eyes. If the playground looks like it hasn't been used in months, why would a parent want to leave their child with you knowing their child won't get fresh air and sunshine every day!
8. Staff appearance. Do you have a dress code policy in place? Do parents see your staff as a professional by their appearance? Are your staff dressed in shorts too short or shirts too low so that parents are uncomfortable around them? Do they wear flip-flops on the play ground where they could trip or fall and cause you a workers compensation claim? Do you allow staff to wear t-shirts with insulting or offending language? You can't go wrong with scrubs and tennis shoes. They are relatively inexpensive and easily washable. Many centers have company logo t-shirts that staff must wear at all times. Just a thought.
9. Market your business wherever you are. Business cards are inexpensive and easy to pass out to parents while grocery shopping-especially new parents with little babies who you just happen to meet in the aisles of the store.
10. Business flyers. Create a colorful and informative business flyer and ask the Health Department, doctors offices (especially pediatricians), laundry mats or grocery stores if you can post them. Often businesses will let you post flyers in the employee lounge or break room. It never hurts to ask and this is free advertising.
11. Bartering. If you have a parent who needs child care, is on the waiting list at the ELC and cannot afford to pay full fee, why not barter for some scholarship help. Can they come in a couple of evenings and help clean as an off-set of their child care fees? Can they mow or provide landscaping? Can they cook? Could they go to the grocery store for you? Remember, if they are working or volunteering at your center regularly, they must have Level II clearance-check the DCF code for all the information on this.
12. Fund raising. Have a business-wide yard sale at every seasonal change-Spring, Summer, Winter and Fall. Scholastic Books will do book fairs or you can do book club orders and get lots of free books for your classrooms or to use as birthday/holiday gifts for the children.
13. Daily schedule and lesson plans. Are these displayed in your classroom(s)? Can parents and/or visitors clearly see what the children are learning daily? Can you show them your resources from which you are teaching their children? Do parents feel welcomed at your site-at all times? Do you include them in field trips and holiday/birthday parties and not just ask for donations?

These are just suggestions to think about. Focus on what makes your center unique so parents can't wait to bring their child to you for QUALITY care. Show them you are a difference maker!

## TIS' THE SEASON TO BE CREATIVE!

Read the book, “There Was An Old Lady Who Swallowed A Bell”, then do this cute Christmas craft with the children. Remember-it’s the process not the project that is important so let them paint and decorate their little sleigh the way they want it to look, not your expectations of how it should look!

### CANDY SLEIGH

**Supplies:**

Square tissue or cracker box (ask parents to donate)

2 Candy Canes

Red or green duct tape or finger paint

Stickers

Red and green peppermint wrapped candy

Rosemary, cedar or other greenery sprigs



1. Cut off and discard the top of the box. Draw a cutting line with a black Sharpie marker and let the children follow the line to cut the edge of the box to resemble a sleigh.
2. Cover the sleigh with red or green tape or paint. When dry, add stickers to decorate.
3. Cut 4 small “X’s” in the lower corner of the sleigh and insert the candy cane ‘runners’. (Adult help with this and an Exacto craft knife is helpful).
4. Fill the sleigh with candy and a few sprigs of rosemary or other greenery.
5. Add a handmade card from the children and you have a wonderful gift for parents!

### THE HELPING HAND CLASSROOM WREATH

**Supplies:**

Large paper plate

Green paint or markers

Green Construction Paper

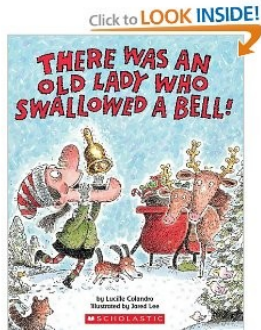
Red bow

1. To make the base of the wreath, cut out the middle of a paper plate. Let the children color the remaining circle green with markers or paint. Trace the children’s hands on green construction paper until you have a total of 31 hand prints. Cut the hands out and write one good deed (smile, nice to friends, clean-up helper, followed the rules, listening ears, walking feet, caught being good, etc...). Put the hands in a basket and each day pick at least one good deed that you have seen a child perform, put their name on the handprint and stick it on the wreath with double stick tape. Be sure every child is recognized for a good deed and their name gets put on the wreath! By Christmas, you have a wonderful classroom wreath for your children to be proud of!

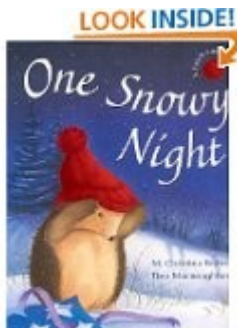


## Wonderful Holiday Reading Ideas for December!

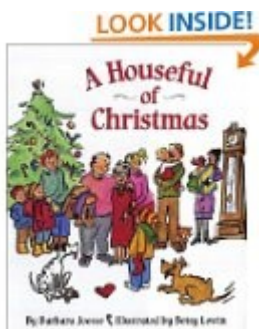
Make your reading center cozy this month. If you have a classroom tree, why not move your reading center close to the tree with some quilts and pillows and a basket of holiday books. Warm chocolate milk with miniature marshmallows is always a nice treat. When the children lay down for naptime, quietly read "Twas the Night Before Christmas" to lull them to sleep. Reading...it is a comforting and soothing thing!



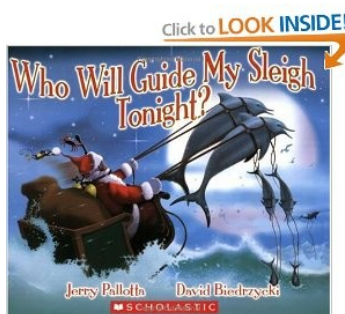
**THERE WAS AN OLD LADY WHO SWALLOWED A BELL!** By Lucille Colandro. You won't believe what happens when this old lady (same one who swallows flies, pies and leaves!) swallows a bell, some bows, some gifts, a sack, a sleigh and some reindeer! A rollicking fun book the children will request over and over again.



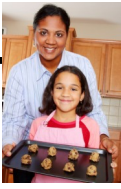
**ONE SNOWY NIGHT** by M. Christina Butler. Little hedgehog receives a snug, red woolly hat from Father Christmas but his prickles get in the way. He has an idea and the hat turns out to be the best Christmas present ever! A wonderful book about sharing and caring for others with a sweet ending.



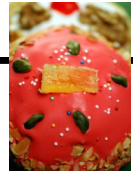
**A HOUSEFUL OF CHRISTMAS** by Barbara Joossee. A wonderful story about a large family gathering at Granny's house for Christmas and what happens when they all get snowed in! Wonderful illustrations and a very quiet ending. Tick, tick, tick.....



**WHO WILL GUIDE MY SLEIGH TONIGHT?** By Jerry Pallotta. The job is too big for Santa and the children will love the wonderful illustrations as Santa finds someone to guide his sleigh from mice, to tigers, to skunks and monkeys! He eventually finds just the right team to get the job done. The children will laugh all the way through this one!



## SEASONAL COOKING ACTIVITY OF THE MONTH!



Reprinted from KIDBIZ Newsletter, an ezine by child care author and speaker, Patricia Dischler.  
Subscribe at [www.patriciadischler.com](http://www.patriciadischler.com).

I made something new this week and I think it's a perfect activity for the kids to make really special looking holiday treats - cookie balls! No oven needed, just a microwave.

The concept is simple:

Take a package of store bought cookies, put in a Ziploc and let the kids bang it until they are mashed into crumbs. (Perfect for the toddlers!)

Mix it with a cup of something soft (cream cheese, frosting or peanut butter)

Use a small cookie scoop to scoop up and shape into balls. Freeze on a cookie sheet.

In a small glass bowl, melt chocolate chips in the microwave. (About 2 min. for 12 oz. bag) You can use milk chocolate, white, dark, or even butterscotch or peanut butter chips.

Toss a frozen ball into the melted chocolate and use a fork to cover it and pick up, draining away excess chocolate. Place on wax paper covered cookie sheet. (Tip: use a fondue fork to push it off the regular fork onto the paper for less mess.)

Top with sprinkles, or after a minute dip the fondue fork on the top and pull up quickly to create a chocolate swirl on the top.

Use your imagination to come up with endless flavor combinations:

Mint Oreos, cream cheese, covered in milk chocolate.

Nutter Butters, vanilla frosting, covered in peanut butter chips

Vanilla wafers, lemon frosting, covered in white chocolate.

Get some pretty little fluted paper cups to put them in, place in a white bakers box decorated by the child, tie with a red ribbon, and you've got a great holiday gift!



### CONTACT INFORMATION

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