

Exchange

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November/December 2007

Issue #178

\$10.00

The Early Childhood Leaders' Magazine Since 1978

Preschool Academics
Intentional Infant and Toddler Care
Creating Indoor Spaces
Project-Based Learning
Parent Handbooks
Leadership
Sustaining Change
Family Values
Professionalism
Supporting Military Families
Exchange at NAEYC

Beginnings Workshop:
Curriculum and Nature



Mike and
Debi Grillo
"A Child's Touch..."
Thornton, Colorado

Derek and Ashriel attend
NAEYC Childcare
Conference in Chicago.
The A.C.T. cover story
in the Exchange magazine
was available to the 35,000
attendees at the conference.

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The Early Childhood Leaders Magazine Since 1978

30
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2007 Annual NAEYC Conference and Expo

November 7-10, 2007 • Chicago, Illinois



Picture yourself on the cover of Exchange!

This year at NAEYC, *Exchange* is delighted to invite you to help celebrate our 30th anniversary. Since *Exchange* magazine made its debut in 1978, we have been honored to feature over 150 early childhood professionals from around the world on the cover of the

magazine. Now, it is your turn. Get the recognition you deserve for your important work with children. Visit us at **booth #2224** to receive a free photo of yourself appearing on the cover of *Exchange, The Early Childhood Leaders' Magazine Since 1978*.

The Exchange booth is always the "meeting place" during NAEYC. So make plans to stop by, pose for your photo, take a few moments to relax, and visit with your peers. We'll save you a comfortable seat. See you there!

Visit the exhibit booths of Exchange's advertising partners. On the next few pages, you'll find a convention hall map and reference guide showing where the booths of Exchange advertisers are located.

Angeles Group, LLC

www.angeles-group.com Booth 1405
Please join us in celebrating Angeles' 50th Anniversary! Enter to win prizes, preview our newest items, browse quality products for your classroom and more!

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Exchange Events

NAEYC Workshop:

All we've ever needed to know we've learned from you — 30 great ideas for delivering quality services

Presenters: Bonnie and Roger Neugebauer

Location: Room E450 B

Time: Thursday, November 8, 8:30-9:30 AM

Calling all writers and aspiring writers!

Do you want to share your ideas and experience with others in the field, get help with your writing, and pick up tips on how to get your writing published? Come meet Donna Rafanello and learn more about Exchange's Mentor Writing Project! Everyone is welcome!

Presenter: Donna Rafanello

Location: Exchange Booth 2224

Time: Thursday, November 8, 4:30-5:30 PM

Friday, November 8, 11:30 AM-12:30 PM

Saturday, November 8, 9-10 AM

Discount School Supply

www.discountsschoolsupply.com Booth 1405
At Discount School Supply shop our selection of show-special items at low prices, make take-away crafts, and spin the Wheel of Fun for prizes!

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http://etl.mnchildcare.org Booth 2407
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Ellison

www.ellison.com Booth 310
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Exchange Magazine

www.ChildCareExchange.com Booth 2224

Meet Mike and Debi Grillo

“A Child’s Touch...”

Thornton, Colorado



PHOTOGRAPH BY BONNIE NEUGEBAUER

We have attended numerous national conferences through the years, and have found that many others share our dream of making a lasting difference in young lives. Meeting others with a shared passion for early childhood education always rejuvenates us, and we love to hear their stories. This is ours.

Our journey with “A Child’s Touch...” began in 1977 when we opened a small Christian school in a mobile home park. We were young and enthusiastic about having our own school, but at the same time apprehensive about taking on such a great responsibility. Mike taught the kindergarten and handled maintenance for the building and the playgrounds, while Debi managed the office, handled the staff, and focused on curriculum. It might have been difficult for other husband/wife teams to spend so much time together, but we actually did quite well.

We leased the property for 12 years, but knew we could not create the kind of child care we envisioned at that location. We moved to our current location in 1989. It was a run-down church building with a large empty field in back, located on a side street in an older 2.5 acre subdivision. While not a very visible location, the size of the property was of utmost importance to us. In nine weeks we converted the site into a functioning

vibrant school. The majority of the work was completed by a small group of us working long hours.

We continued to expand over the next ten years with three additional buildings. Our biggest building project came two years ago when we developed our brand new infant/toddler wing. Adding infant care marked a major shift but allowed us to keep families intact, and ensured that we were recruiting new long-term families. This building is truly the showpiece of the school, a state-of-the-art, over-sized facility literally designed from the ground up for babies. Radiant floor heat keeps the temperature steady where these precious babies spend much of their time, and a HEPA air filtration system helps their immune systems develop.

We have now been at this location for 18 years. The empty one-acre field has slowly been transformed into 14 different play areas. Some of these play spaces are extremely large like the soccer field, asphalt playground, and the castle structure. The castle has two levels with five 16-foot towers. It took two of us an entire summer to build. Other playgrounds are a bit smaller, giving the teachers a large number of play spaces to choose from each time they go outside. We are fortunate to now have large, mature trees and

bushes in our natural playgrounds. These special areas allow the children to explore in a natural setting with waterfalls, ponds, small hiking trails, and log cabins.

Large separate interaction buildings dominate the final part of our backyard. These are unique in their function and heated for winter use. Our General Store gives children a place to be shoppers and clerks. The Woodworking Barn is for our older children. Our kindergarten children handle real hand drills, saws, and hammers as they create woodworking projects. The Discovery Station offers rotating exhibits every 2½ months and has an oversized ball pit. The changing exhibits currently include a camping unit, bug and insect unit, gymnastics unit, block play unit, and a unit illustrating the beloved children’s story, “Where The Wild Things Are.” Our next rotating exhibit will focus on children with special needs and how they function in an environment that accommodates their needs. The final building is the Inventors’ House. It is designed after a children’s museum with science-related exhibits and experiments that demonstrate gravity, electricity, and much more.

We are excited that this outdoor area will be expanding dramatically in size due to a recent purchase of the property

adjacent to "A Child's Touch...". We envision that big fallen trees, rocks, and dirt hills will transform this empty lot into a unique natural playground. The house likely will become an expanded lounge and training area for our staff in 2008.

We have been fortunate to be able to construct the majority of the playgrounds and classroom buildings ourselves. This has kept down the cost and allowed us more freedom and flexibility to create an environment that the children can enjoy.

While the physical facilities and playgrounds are important, and bring much joy to the children, the most important aspects of our school are the teachers and our philosophy. We consistently spend time training our teachers in our approach to child care. Our goal is to create a safe and peaceful atmosphere for the children where they can be free to be themselves, to explore, to exercise their curiosity and their imagination, and to grow academically, socially, physically, and spiritually.

Current brain research along with Gardner's Eight Intelligences Theory has proven what we've known all along — that all children learn differently. Our "positive play" approach encourages lots of hands-on learning and provides children with choices.

Recent scientific findings tell us that the first five years are crucial in a child's ability to learn, to love, to trust, and to develop a strong sense of self. That's because three-quarters of brain development happens *after* birth — primarily during the first five years of life. What's more, how we care for our children in their earliest years has a profound impact on how productive, compassionate, and confident they'll be as adults. Put simply, a child's early experiences influence healthy devel-



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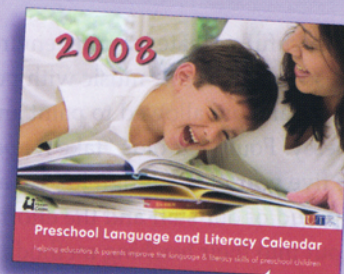
2008 Preschool Language and Literacy Calendar

Helping educators & parents improve the language & literacy skills of preschool children

This beautiful 2008 calendar continues the four-year tradition of providing educators and parents of children aged 3-5 with a practical, research-based tool that promotes preschool children's language and literacy development.

Look for an updated research focus in 2008. This includes:

- exposing children to rare and unusual vocabulary
- promoting the use of abstract language
- helping children understand "print concepts" and how print works
- promoting phonological awareness by "playing" with words, syllables and sounds
- teaching the alphabetic principle – that letters represent sounds and are combined to form words
- supporting literacy learning in two languages



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opment because they determine how the brain will be “wired.”

Think about it: confidence, competence, security, and self-esteem can be wired into a child’s brain if they are stimulated, nurtured, challenged, played with, and allowed to explore. Since children learn best by doing, a hands-on approach is encouraged in our program. Children will touch, feel, smell, listen, discover, get messy, and experience what’s in their world. The themes and activities included in the curriculum, as well as the design of the program itself, allow children to grow in all areas of development.

We stretch our staff to be creative in their teaching approach and strive to meet all children’s learning styles by changing interest areas and placing a high priority on room arrangement. Their entire classroom becomes their canvas for teaching, and classes are regularly transformed for various units. We even have a “Prop Shop” for storing the many rotating items needed to convert their classrooms! Children feel like they’ve been transported into the ocean, onto the farm, into their backyard. They are amazed by Jack’s beanstalk that grew overnight and covers their entire room when they arrive the next morning.

Staff watchfully create learning environments so infants create music with pots and pans and are allowed to paint and get messy! Four year olds “take it apart” while five year olds “design it.” We are very proud of our staff and the effort they put into their teaching methods and creating a unique environment for children. We never want them to stop learning or growing.

To encourage this goal, “A Child’s Touch...” provides on-going training for new and long-term staff; financial assistance for those attending ECE college classes; a Staff Trainer; Team Directors



PHOTOGRAPH BY BONNIE NEUGEBAUER

with responsibilities ranging from mentoring their team, sharing experience, and assisting administration with curriculum development, and staff training.

For the past 10 years we have taken our teachers to the mountains for a yearly weekend staff retreat while we close the center. You’ll find our staff running through the forest for physical tasks, and engaged in mental challenges, as well as organized games, skits, and activities that promote team-building skills that will improve their teaching techniques. They return to their classrooms on Monday with renewed enthusiasm. The result is that it bonds the teachers together and provides them with enthusiasm for trying new ideas out in the classroom.

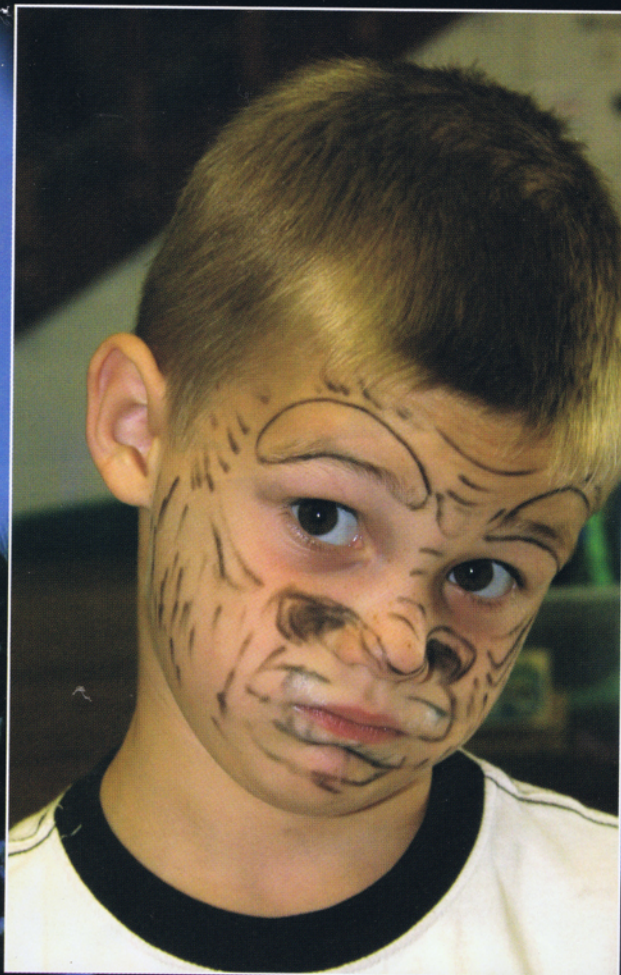
“A Child’s Touch...” will never be complete — we will always strive for excellence, to be better than the year before. We want our parents to be amazed by the opportunities for their little ones, but we also want them to be astonished by all the changes when they come back to visit years later.

Over 30 years later, we are both still involved with “A Child’s Touch...” on a daily basis. We began with the thought

that if we could make a difference in just one child’s life it will all be worth it; now that we have former students bringing their children to us, we see that the long-term results are worth all of the struggles over the years. It is humbling and touching to hear adults speak of the impact “A Child’s Touch...” had on their lives those many years ago.

Our mission statement says that we seek “to provide a quality education, maximizing the development of our children through a Christian philosophy and dedicated staff.” As we attempt to live that philosophy each day, we understand that our journey has no finish line. The Lord has blessed us over the years as we have attempted to create a top-quality, nurturing, loving, educational environment. There is no occupation that offers a greater reward than meeting this need and seeing the children develop and grow year after year. We trust and pray that “A Child’s Touch...” will continue impacting children for generations to come.

In conclusion, you can take an interactive tour of our facility through our website, www.achildstouch.com or come for a personal visit to Colorado!



**Quarrels would
not last long if
the fault were
only on one side.**

François de La Rochefoucauld

**In each of us are places where we have
never gone. Only by pressing the
limits do you ever find them.**

Joyce Brothers

*Good management
is the art of making
problems so
interesting and
their solutions so
constructive that
everyone wants to
get to work and
deal with them.*

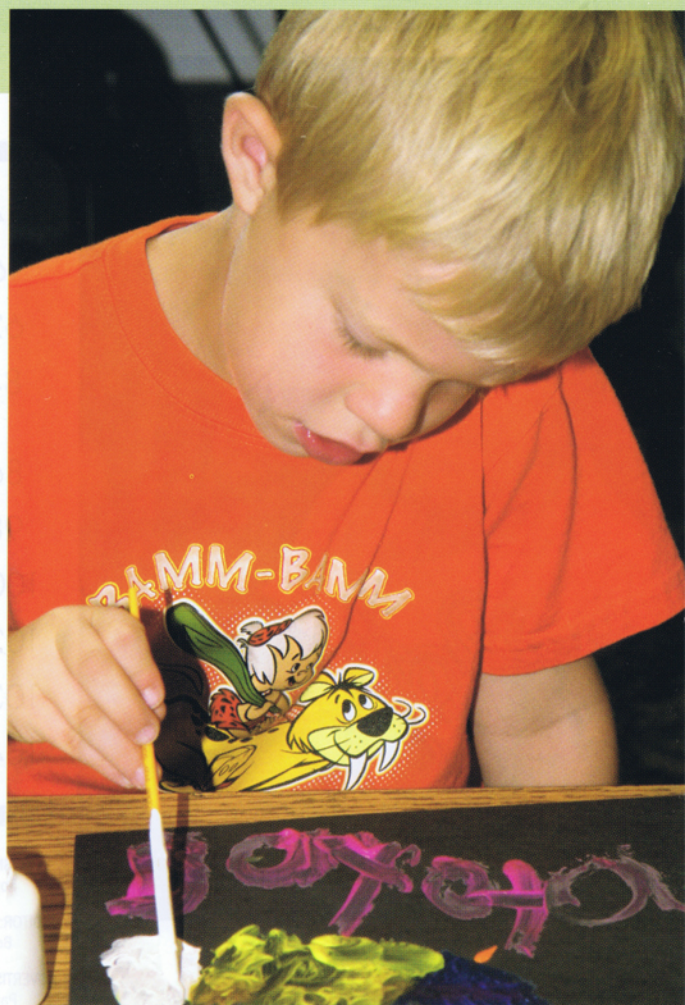
Paul Hawken

**It is better to first get the right people on the bus, the
wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the
right seats, and then figure out where to drive.**

Jim Collins

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Exchange

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Mission Statement

Exchange is committed to supporting early childhood professionals worldwide in their efforts to craft early childhood environments where adults and children thrive – environments that foster friendship, curiosity, self-esteem, joy, and respect; where the talents of all are fully challenged and justly rewarded.

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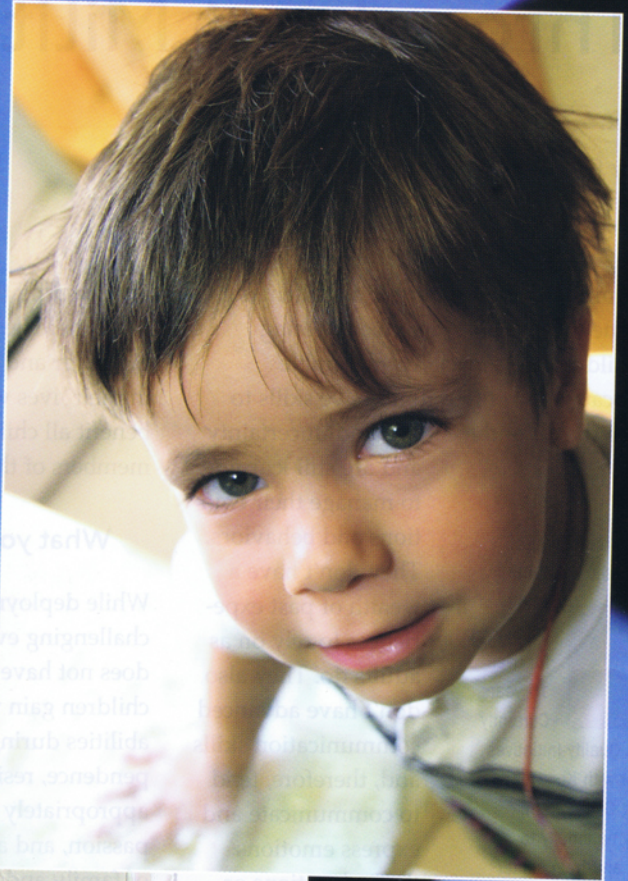
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In nature there are neither
rewards nor punishments
— there are consequences.

Robert G. Ingersoll

You already possess everything necessary to become great. Native American (Crow) Proverb



Acting is
nothing more
or less than
playing. The
idea is to
humanize
life.

George Eliot