

Mazel Tov & Congratulations

BIRTHS

Congratulations to Honey Kridel on the birth Zeke Tiernan. Grandparents are Jay and Linda of her first great-grandchild, a girl, Jude Tiernan, Kridel, of Kirkwood, MO. ✨ on December 2, 2010. Parents are Molly and

Schools

With Spring Weather in the Air- Let's Get Outside and Have Some Fun

By Jen Lahn, director, Jewish Preschool on Sardis

Over the past three decades childhood obesity has tripled. It used to be that children walked to and from school, played outside right up until dinner time, and ate meals that included vegetables and much smaller portions than what is the norm in American households today. According to author and parenting expert Richard Louv, children today spend much less time playing outside than any other previous generation. Lack of time, the daily stressors on parents and safety concerns are all factors that lead to less time to supervise outdoor play or take trips to the local park. Of course, television, computers, the new iPad craze and other technological teasers are all very appealing options for the busy parent who wants their child to be occupied. Time spent with these "gadgets" has replaced climbing trees, playing ball and riding bikes through the neighborhood.

Young children need opportunities to be physically active through play and other activities. Physical activity assists children in obtaining and improving fine and gross motor skills, coordination, balance and control, hand-eye coordination, strength, dexterity, and flexibility, all of which are necessary for children to reach developmental milestones. Going outside has been shown to reduce obesity, it contributes to better health, and it counteract the effects of attention deficit disorder and other learning problems.

There is no question that the outdoor environment is the best place for preschoolers to practice and perfect their developing physical skills. It is where children can feel free to explore, create and use their imagination. Outside is



Mikkel Hertzberg enjoying the JPS playground with the excitement of spring around the corner.

where they can fully experience motor skills such as running, climbing, jumping, pulling, and pushing. Children can also learn to throw and catch, and develop the muscle tone that is so important for many indoor school readiness skills.

Recent studies are showing that as many as half of American children are not getting enough exercise, and risk factors such as hypertension and arteriosclerosis are showing up as early as age 5. We, parents and educators, must find ways in which to get children active and outside now.

The outdoors has much more to offer than just the obvious physical benefits. Social, emotional, and cognitive development are also impacted when children spend time outside. Imagination during outdoor play leads to organizing groups, cooperative play, language development, autonomy, decision-making, taking risks, making rules for games and learning to follow those same rules. Young children may think they are just "playing" outside, when in actuality they are developing important life skills. Preschoolers also learn

through their senses. Outside there are many different and wonderful things for them to see (animals, birds, and green leafy plants), to hear (birds chirping, bees buzzing), to smell (fragrant flowers and rain in the air), to touch (prickly pinecones, smooth rocks), and even to taste (edible gardens, raindrops falling). Children who spend a lot of time acquiring their experiences through television and computers are using only two senses (hearing and sight), which can negatively affect their perceptual abilities.

Since healthy eating and living is a national issue, at JPS we have begun our own initiative to live healthier lives. We have started a JPS Kids On The Run program where our children take pride in participating in weekly physical activities. We will culminate with a Fun Run at the LJCC where children and their families will have fun being healthy together. We were also recipients of a grant called Preventing Obesity By Design which has enabled us to look at our outdoor play area and create a plan to improve the learning environment. Some of those changes will include an edible "mitzvah garden," a natural building block area, stepping stones, a butterfly garden, an area for dramatic play and much more. Stay tuned to hear about our progress, but in the meantime get out and have some fun! ✨



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