



JCCDC Newsletter for Parents, Providers, Community Partners & Staff



A Note from the Director



Each individual, regardless of their abilities, has the right to be respected, embraced, and provided with opportunities to thrive. Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month serves as a profound reminder of these principles, emphasizing the value, rights, and aspirations of those with developmental disabilities.

What is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month?

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month is a month-long observance that brings attention to the varied and unique experiences of individuals with developmental disabilities. It's a time to celebrate their achievements, advocate for their rights, and promote understanding and inclusivity within society.

When is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month?

The entire month of March is dedicated to Developmental Disabilities Awareness. During this period, various events, programs, and advocacy campaigns take place across the country, uniting communities in the spirit of inclusion and acceptance.



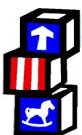
- 3/5 Ash Wednesday
- 3/7 Employee Appreciation Day
- 3/8 International Women's Day
- 3/12 National Plant a Flower Day
- 3/21 World Down Syndrome Day



- 4/2 World Autism Awareness Day
- 4/7 World Health Day
- 4/18 Good Friday
- 4/20 Easter Sunday
- 4/23 Administrative Professional Day



- 3/17 Dominique Jackson, FE Specialist
- 3/26 Charva Williams, ECE Specialist





SPOTLIGHT ON..

DEI

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Submitted by Dr. Earlene Reynolds, JCCDC Executive Director

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in preschool education for children and those with disabilities involves creating welcoming environments that value differences and provide equal access to learning.

How to incorporate DEI

- **Create inclusive environments:** Adjust the height of equipment, provide accessible spaces, and offer a balance of structured and unstructured activities
- **Train staff:** Ensure staff can respond to diverse families in an affirming way
- **Involve families:** Encourage parents to participate in activities and parenting groups
- **Talk about differences:** Ask open-ended questions, listen without judgment, and speak up when bias occurs
- **Make spaces accessible**
Ensure that classrooms are accessible to children with disabilities and that activities are accessible to everyone.
- **Use inclusive materials**
Use toys, books, and art supplies that reflect a variety of cultures and abilities.
- **Celebrate diversity**
Acknowledge holidays from different cultures and celebrate the achievements of people from diverse backgrounds.
- **Provide personalized support**
Use differentiated instruction and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to help each child reach their potential.
- **Encourage empathy**
Help children recognize differences in abilities, identities, and cultural backgrounds.

Benefits of inclusive education

- Inclusive education benefits all children, including those with special needs.
- It promotes social skills, self-esteem, and empathy.
- It can reduce autism severity and increase language development and social skills for children with severe disabilities.
- It can help children become more considerate citizens and address injustice and discrimination.

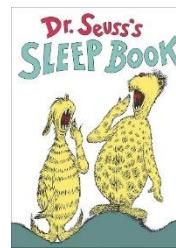
Parents also play a crucial role in inclusive education by advocating for their child's needs and collaborating with the educational team. DEI helps children develop a more accurate representation of the world and prepares them to be considerate citizens in an increasingly interconnected world.

Read Across America Week is

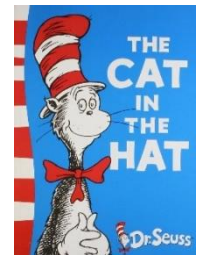
celebrated from March 2 to 8 — it begins on the birthday of the beloved author, Dr. Seuss. The entire month of March, in fact, is dedicated to reading.



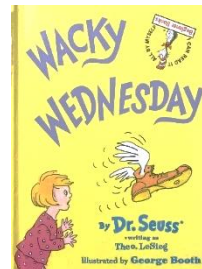
Here are some suggested books for you and your child to read together. Your local library may have them and many more you can share with your child.



Dr. Seuss' Sleep Book

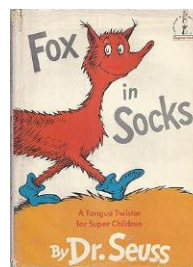
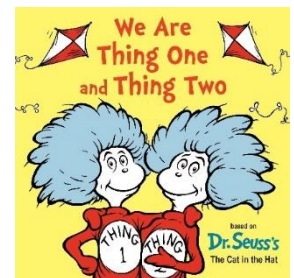


The Cat in the Hat



Wacky Wednesday

We are Thing One and Thing Two



Fox in Socks



Submitted by Tamika Bright,
Health & Safety Assistant

Is stress making you angry and grouchy? The Health & Safety Component of JCCDC Head Start/Early Head Start has some "Stress Busters" suggestions to help bring back calm and peace to your busy life. If your stress is getting out of control and you need quick relief, try one of these tips.

1. Deep Breaths: close your eyes if you want to and take 5 slow deep breaths.
2. All Together Now: be prepared for school, practice, and other activities ahead of time to help make your day less stressful.
3. Tension-Melters: practice shoulder rolls – raise your shoulders up to your ears then backwards, down and forward, making a circle. This will loosen up those muscles
4. Positive Self-Talk: say positive statements inside you head to help stay calm and handle the stress. Use phrases like:
 - "Stop and slow down my thinking"
 - "I can do this."
 - "This won't last forever."
 - "Stay calm and breath slowly."
 - "I can handle this."
 - "Chill out, calm down."
5. Laugh-Aerobics: did you know that it takes 15 facial muscles to laugh? Laughing can make you feel good and that can last for a long time.
6. Friendly Fun: get a friend or a group together to play ball, go to the movies, or play a board game – or just hand out and talk. Friends can help you work through your problems and find some solutions you may not have thought about.
7. Journal Writing: write down anything you want to get off your chest – things that make you angry, things, that make you happy or hopeful, things that confuse you. This is a good place to sort out your feelings in private, in a secret notebook or journal.
8. Connections: talk to someone about what's bothering you, instead of keeping your feelings bottled up inside. It might be a friend, a family member, a church person, a teacher or school counselor – someone you trust and respect.
9. Chill Time: think of activities that help you relax. Perhaps listening to music, day dreaming, taking a hot bath, watching TV, taking a short nap, reading a book, cooking, playing with your pets, drawing, painting, or coloring, writing stories, working on puzzles or working in a garden are some activities that you may enjoy.

Easy Ring Cake

Submitted by Stella Baskin, Nutrition Coordinator

Prep Time: 10minutes Cook Time: 20minutes

Ingredients

- 2 cans store-bought cinnamon rolls (you could use Pillsbury Flaky Cinnamon Rolls with Butter Cream Icing)
- Yellow green and purple sugar
- 1 plastic toy baby if desired



Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Place cinnamon rolls sideways on a large cookie sheet that has been greased or lined with a silicone mat. Arrange cinnamon rolls in a circular pattern. It should look like a flower when you're done. Press down on cinnamon rolls with your hand to flatten them slightly.
3. Bake according to package instructions. Let cool.
4. Frost with the buttercream that comes with the cinnamon rolls. Add yellow, green and purple sugar. Serve immediately or store covered for up to 24 hours at room temperature. It is best when eaten the first day.

Time to **SPRING** Forward

Don't forget to
move your clocks
forward 1 hour

March 9, 2025





6 Things You May Not Know About

MARDI GRAS



1. *Mardi Gras and Carnival are the same celebrations.*

Though Mardi Gras technically refers only to Fat Tuesday, the Mardi Gras season actually begins on Epiphany, a Christian holiday celebrated on January 6 that is otherwise known as Three Kings Day or the Twelfth Day of Christmas. In Brazil and many other countries, this period between Epiphany and Fat Tuesday is known as Carnival. Whichever name you prefer to use, the revelries of Mardi Gras last until midnight Tuesday night, when Ash Wednesday ushers in 40 days of Lent.



2. *New Orleans did not host the first North American Mardi Gras.*

Mardi Gras is believed to have arrived in North America on March 3, 1699, when the French-Canadian explorer Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville camped about 60 miles downriver from the future site of New Orleans. Knowing it was Fat Tuesday back in France, d'Iberville named the spot Point du Mardi Gras and held a small gala. A few years later, French soldiers and settlers feasted and wore masks as part of Mardi Gras festivities in the newly founded city of Mobile (present-day Alabama). To this day, Mobile claims to have the oldest annual Mardi Gras celebration in the United States.

3. *Green, Purple and Gold are the colors of Mardi Gras.*

The colors of Mardi Gras are purple, green, and gold. These colors are used to represent justice, faith, and power.

Explanation

- **Purple:** Represents the virtue of justice and is also associated with royalty
- **Green:** Represents the virtue of faith
- **Gold:** Represents the power of God



the virtues of

4. *Mardi Gras occasionally gets canceled.*

Since Comus ushered in the modern era of Mardi Gras in 1857, the New Orleans festivities have been canceled about a dozen times. Most of those cancellations came during the Civil War, World War I and World War II, though revelers also stayed home during an 1870s yellow fever outbreak. A scaled-down version even took place in 2006, just months after Hurricane Katrina flooded the Gulf Coast and killed over 1,800 people. Many in-person celebrations and parades in New Orleans in 2021 were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



5. *"Krewes" plan the Celebration*

A "krewes" in Mardi Gras refers to a social organization that plans and participates in parades and balls during the Carnival season, essentially acting as the driving force behind the festivities, with each krewe having its own unique theme, costumes, and parade floats, making them the core element of the New Orleans Mardi Gras celebration; essentially, a krewe is a club dedicated to organizing and participating in Mardi Gras events.

6. *King Cake is only eaten during Mardi Gras.*

Available only during the Mardi Gras season, king cake is typically made with brioche Braided and laced with cinnamon, the dough is then glazed with purple, green and gold covered in icing in those same Mardi Gras colors. What really sets king cake apart from desserts, however, is the small plastic baby hidden inside. Whoever finds the baby in his slice must buy the next cake or perhaps host the next party.



dough.
sugar or
other
or her

APRIL IS NATIONAL MONTH OF Hope



During April, buds come into full bloom, brightening our days and the National Month of Hope also lends a hand in lifting our spirits.

Bringing hope to someone can take many forms. Being a positive role model in a child's life or providing a community foundation for future endeavors both provide hope for the future. Lift the spirits of a friend suffering from a medical issue or volunteer at a local homeless shelter.

We are each able to bring a ray of hope in our own ways by contributing wisdom, time,

kindness, and when possible, donating to charities that make the impossible possible.

HOW TO OBSERVE #NationalMonthOfHope

- Everyone needs a little hope now and then. Spread a little sunshine their way and bring some hope into their lives.
- Volunteer by reading to children in schools.
- Experience meaningful and healthy communication with loved ones, family, friends, co-workers, and colleagues.
- Giving of time, food, and money to help families in need.
- Minister to those who are home-bound by writing letters and visiting.
- Post on social media words of hope.
- Sharing your story of overcoming with those who are going through hard times.
- Lending a helping hand to those in need.
- Cleaning up areas where there is trash such as parks and beaches.

A Windowsill Garden



Starting your windowsill garden is as easy as placing the ends or tops of a few kitchen produce scraps in about an inch of fresh water and setting them in partial sunshine. Your only maintenance is to change the water daily – now you see why this is such a good project for kids.

To start plants from food scraps, simply cut off the base or root end of a vegetable like celery, lettuce, or green onions, place it in a shallow dish with a small amount of water, and keep it on a sunny windowsill; once roots develop, transplant the plant into soil with the root side down.

Key steps:

- **Choose the right scraps:** Vegetables like celery, lettuce, green onions, cabbage, garlic cloves, and even potato sprouts are good candidates for regrowing from scraps.
- **Prepare the scrap:** Cut off the base or root end, leaving a small section with a cut surface.
- **Root in water:** Place the cut end in a shallow dish with a small amount of water, ensuring the water level is just enough to cover the base.
- **Sunlight:** Position the dish on a sunny windowsill to encourage growth.
- **Change water regularly:** Refresh the water every few days to prevent bacteria growth.
- **Transplant to soil:** Once roots develop, plant the scrap in a pot with potting soil, burying the root section and leaving the top exposed.

Important points to remember:

- **Not all scraps work:** While many vegetables can be re-grown from scraps, some fruits or highly processed foods won't sprout new plants.
- **Monitor for root development:** Check the water regularly to see if roots are forming before transplanting.
- **Provide adequate light:** Ensure your plants have access to enough sunlight once they are in soil.

Eight Ways Good Dads are Great for Kids and Communities

Submitted by LaTausha Holifield, FS-ERSEA Manager

When dads are present and actively engaged in raising their kids, their children on average...

1. Have better, healthier relationships

- Make wiser decisions about relationships
- Less inclined to have sexual relations too young
- Seven times less likely to get pregnant as a teenager
- Therefore, reduce the number of births, abortions, and STDs among teens

2. Have better emotional health and control

- More likely to be non-aggressive toward others
- Four times less likely to be prone to anxiety or depression
- Less likely to have behavioral and emotional difficulties
- Therefore, contribute to more peaceful and safer schools and communities

3. Have better physical health

- Twice as likely to be physically fit
- Probably more likely to be breastfed
- Two times less likely to be a victim of sudden infant death syndrome
- Therefore, contribute to a healthier community, reducing health care cost.

4. Are less likely to become addicted to substances

- Less likely to use and abuse alcohol
- Less prone to use and abuse drugs
- Less likely to become depressed, which sometimes leads to addictive behavior

5. Are more likely to feel safe and more confident

- Ten times less likely to suffer physical or emotional abuse
- Six times less probable that they will suffer neglect
- Therefore, increasing children's sense of wellbeing, and their chances of success in life

6. Have better odds of academic success

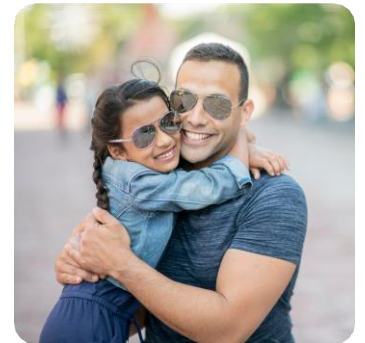
- More likely to get top grades
- Two times less likely to repeat a grade
- Two times less likely to drop out of high school
- Less likely to be suspended or expelled
- Therefore, their individual as well as the overall school performance improves

7. More likely to stay out of trouble

- Less likely to engage in risky behavior
- Less prone to commit a crime
- Less likely to go to prison
- Therefore, reduces the cost of policing criminal justice and incarceration

8. Less likely to be poor

- Four times less likely to live in extreme poverty at some time in their youth
- Two times less likely to experience extreme poverty as adults
- Therefore, reducing the community's charitable and government cost of providing goods and services for the poor.



If you are a father engaged in the raising of your children, we salute you! If you are a mom, we encourage you to support the involvement of dad in co-parenting. Acknowledge and celebrate his role in your child's life by nominating him for a Good Dad Award.