

ArtStart 2015: A Passport to the World

Jambo! Bonjour! Ni Hau! Get ready for an evening of international music and food, drinks, art, and exciting silent auction bidding.

Each year at ArtStart, the Collegiate Chapel of St. Andrew (next to PIC) is transformed into a magnificent gallery to exhibit the handiwork of all our young artists. *Don't miss this great display of talent!*

Our committee of parents has been busy planning this special evening since July: Chair **Lisa Falcone** (Elena is in the Bumblebees and Nina is in our After School Center), **Robert Chaney** (Fletcher and Theo are proud PIC alums) **Catherine Pancake** (Eliana is in the Peanuts), **Ozlem Onder** (Deniz is in the Rainbows and Ada is a proud PIC alum), **Reena Rai**, (Rama is in the Moonbeams), **David Stotz** (Eli is in our After School Center and Abby and Mitchell are proud PIC alums), and **Palak Singhee** (Jiva is in the Caterpillars).

Have an idea for an auction donation? It's the special talents and skills of PIC's parents, teachers, alumni, and friends that make our silent auction unique. Talk to a committee member or email Development Manager, Karen Stachelek at kstachelek@parentinfantcenter.org.

Bid and you may bring home...an overnight hotel stay, tickets to a production at The Wilma Theater, a vacation stay in Costa Rica, or lessons to learn how to say *hello* in Italian. *Plus more!*

Money raised through ArtStart broadens the impact of our tuition assistance fund, strengthens our community, and enriches our programs. The participation of our families, teachers, alumni, and friends each year drives the success of ArtStart and directly benefits children in our classrooms.

PIC Plant Sale Success

Families, community members and alumni came out in force on May 1 and 2, to support the annual Plant Sale which raises funds for PIC's tuition assistance program. The fund has been helping more families have access to quality early childhood education for nearly 30 years. Participation in the sale supports this fund and helps strengthen PIC's diversity and sense of community.

The sale raised \$32,000, and it could not possibly have happened without the volunteer efforts of our families, staff and alumni. So many of you helped with unloading deliveries, filling and carrying orders, and helping the customers who came out to the chapel. We were very lucky to have great volunteer crews from **Reed Technology** and **Beneficial Bank's Blue-Gooders**.

This year alumni and alumni parents were invited to spend time on Saturday reconnecting and to learn what's happening now at PIC. Director Deb Green spent the morning with them giving tours of the Magic Circle playground and Sweet, Spruce and Stucco buildings. *We enjoyed seeing you back at PIC and hope to see more of you next year!*



Family Book Fest in November!

Join us on Saturday, November 24 from 9:30 am to 12:00 pm at West Philadelphia's Rotunda for read-aloud stories, music, and fun activities for families. The annual PIC Family Book Fest is free and open to the public as a way to encourage literacy and pre-literacy as a family activity. **Learn more at our website and tell your friends!**



Thursday, October 22

Watch for your invite in the mail!

\$30 per person / \$50 per couple.

Buy tickets through the mail, on our website or at the door.

PIC Summer Camp Making Memories



One of the highlights for PIC campers and teachers is the all-camp trip to Marsh Creek State Park. Here is how our first-grade Starlights enjoyed their adventure according to Lead Teacher Linda Delenick.

Upon arrival, my campers voted to visit the spray-park. Soon the air was filled with whoops and hollers as ice cold water filled the revolving buckets overhead and splashed down upon the heads of the hot campers. Giggling friends held hands and ran from one attraction to another.

After about one hour it was time to take a break, eat lunch, reapply sunscreen, and get ready for a swim. The children eagerly ran to the pool steps.

Some Starlights stayed close to the wall until they felt more confident to venture further in the pool. Friends splashed friends, played water tag, did handstands underwater, and even did yoga poses.

By the end of the day they were exhausted. It was not too long before some of them fell asleep. Friends leaned against friends in a jumble of arms and legs. A sure sign it was one of our most memorable days at camp.



news from our neighborhood

PIC's True Colors: This issue of PIC's Neighborhood News, draws upon the color palette from our website. We hope you find it brighter, playful, and perfectly suited to represent the quality learning environment PIC provides for children and their families.

A Message from the Executive Director: Debbie Green

As I write this we are awaiting the passage of the Pennsylvania state budget and I am hopeful that it will include significant investments for early childhood education.

About 140,000 children will be born in Pennsylvania this year, and they will be preschool age in 2018. There are already more than 200,000 Pennsylvania 3- and 4-year-olds each year who are on wait lists for state and federally funded preschool programs such as PreK Counts and Head Start.

These numbers represent so many missed opportunities—*let's stop and think about that for a moment.* And, the experts tell us that we will end up paying for it in the long run with high criminal justice, education, and health-care costs.

The short-term goal of increased funding is to enroll more children in high quality child care programs. Thinking long term, we must begin to tackle the historic separation of families from low and higher socioeconomics in preschool settings.

I have been asked many times why this matters to a program like PIC, where the majority of our families pay full tuition. Emerging research now shows that socioeconomic diversity in classroom composition—a key component of program quality—directly produces positive peer effects

on early development, particularly in the areas of language and literacy. Preschool classroom diversity also promotes positive social-emotional development and reduces racial biases among all children regardless of socioeconomic background.

By kindergarten, children have already formed beliefs regarding racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic identities. Exposure to peers (and their families) from a variety of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds in preschool classrooms may inform these ideas and eliminate emergent prejudices. PIC recognized the benefits of socioeconomic diversity long ago. In 1983 we began serving children in publicly financed care, and in 1986 we established a tuition assistance fund to support families whose income is too high for public funding, but who cannot manage the full cost of child care.

As we talk about equal opportunity, we must start at the very beginning. Quality early education for all children requires more than programs with qualified staff and intentional learning environments. Enrollment must also capture families of different backgrounds, traditions, races, socioeconomics, and composition. In this way, every child's early learning experience will be enhanced.



Ready. Set. Kindergarten!

Each year, approximately 45 - 50 children complete PIC's early learning program fully prepared for kindergarten. Along with learning literacy and numeracy skills, PIC children develop skills for life-long success, such as caring about others, resolving conflicts, critical thinking, and loving nature. As children go back to school this month, we are confident that these young learners are ready!

Debbie

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A Message from the Board President: Leah Finnegan



My involvement at PIC began when my older son Max, who is now entering 7th grade, started in the Bumblebee room at 18 months of age. My husband Brian and I were new to West Philly and had heard great things about PIC. I never would have believed that I would still be actively involved 11 years later!

Our younger son, David, began as a Caterpillar a few years later, and both boys experienced PIC as Rainbows, Fireflies,

Roadrunners, After-Schoolers and Summer Campers.

David is now entering 4th grade and this September marks the first time neither child will be enrolled at PIC. Although in some ways this saddens me, it also exemplifies the magic of PIC in that I choose to continue to be actively involved in the PIC community.

Throughout the years I've volunteered in a number of different capacities, beginning, as many parents do, by taking home laundry to fulfill my PPP.

As I began to appreciate the uniqueness of the PIC community, I became more involved—becoming a room parent, hosting neighborhood potlucks, and joining the Parent Involvement Committee. In 2011, I joined the Board of Directors and two years later became its Treasurer and Vice President.

As the incoming Board President, I'm pleased to be working with a dedicated group of parents, alumni, community members, and administration to help PIC achieve its mission to support parenting by enabling young children to grow and learn in a safe, stimulating, loving environment. I'm excited by the energy and vision of PIC's Executive Director, Deb Green, and I look forward to continued partnering between PIC administration and the Board.

As I reflect on what makes PIC the special place it is, "community" comes to mind. **This October 22, please join me and your fellow PIC community members at ArtStart 2015** (more on page 4) **for a fun adult night out.**

The money we raise will support families struggling with the cost of care at PIC today. The relationships you build may last you a lifetime.

On the Board

We are grateful to retiring Board members: **Julie Bush, Robert Chaney, Delphine Dahan, Jason Glass, Carol Lerner** (Board President), and **Megin Adams Myers**. *Thank you for your time, talents, and dedication.*

We welcome the following new members to PIC's Board of Directors, elected in May 2015: **Erica Cheslock** is the Assistant Director of Advancement at Community Partnership School. She has served on PIC's Development Committee since 2013 and currently chairs this committee. **Sonja Claxton** is the Executive Director of Social Chang(h)er, a community for female social entrepreneurs. Her daughter Lailah attends PIC's After School Center. **Christopher Tharp** is Chief Financial Officer at Northwestern Mutual - Eastern Pennsylvania. His sons, Ethan and Brady attend PIC's After School Center. **Erica Zimmer** is a professional opera singer and voice teacher. Her daughter Maya is a PIC alumna and her son Elijah will begin PIC's early learning program this fall. **Learn about all the members of PIC's Board of Directors at parentinfantcenter.org.**

Ways to support PIC

Make a **donation** (online at parentinfantcenter.org) or participate in a **fundraising event**
Designate PIC during the **United Way or Penn's Way Campaigns**. PIC's number: **02671**
Ask if your company has a **matching gift program**
Kindly remember us in your **estate planning**.

Magic Circle in International Exhibition

PIC's Magic Circle Nature Playground has been accepted as one of 40 designs to be exhibited in *How We Play*, an exhibition of international best practices in the design of outdoor play spaces for children. Hosted by the Community Design Collaborative, in partnership with the Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children (DVAEYC), the exhibition will showcase designs from Philadelphia and cities around the world for outdoor play spaces.

We are so proud of our Nature Playground. It is a beautiful space that enlivens the imagination of young children at PIC and in the West Philadelphia neighborhood. As PIC Executive Director Debbie Green remarked, "All you have to do is watch the children at play to see that it is a masterpiece in natural play space design. We are honored to have been selected to participate in this exhibition." The exhibition will be at the Philadelphia Center for Architecture through September 25, 2015.

We Did it! NAEYC 2015

PIC achieved our NAEYC re-accreditation that is now in effect until 2020! NAEYC accreditation is good for 5 years and recognized nationwide as the mark of quality in early childhood education. Staff celebrated with a *We did it! NAEYC 2015* photo booth.



PIC Honored for Quality

In August, the Parent-Infant Center was among close to 30 programs celebrated by the Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children (DVAEYC) for reaching and maintaining high quality care. Each program had earned a Keystone STARS level 3 or 4 designation from Pennsylvania and accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). **Only 10% of the programs in the country have received national accreditation through NAEYC and far fewer programs in Pennsylvania hold both NAEYC accreditation and the highest level of Keystone STARS designation.**



Help PIC Go Beyond High Quality

PIC does not stop at providing high quality care, we strive to be innovative in our programming. The creation of the **Magic Circle Nature Playground** and PIC's **Recycleteria** (a space dedicated to loose-parts learning) are two such initiatives we have incorporated into our curriculum.

As such, we have a wish list of items that we know will inspire learning, discovery, and active exploration. With help from our families and friends, we will be able to sustain these rich learning environments for children. Please email Executive Director Debbie Green about donations at dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org.

Nature Playground:

Old fiberglass boat transported to PIC | Tree stumps 12" to 24"
Sticks of all sizes | Bags of pinecones, bark, & chestnuts
Good size stones | Old pots, pans, cake and muffin tins, etc.

Recycleteria:

Old CDs | Corks & bottle caps | Colored plastic caps
Styrofoam meat trays | Cardboard circles (from frozen pizzas)
Shiny fabric & silky scarves | Yarn & twine | Wooden spoons

Magic Circle Nature Playground Re-certified



One year after opening our Magic Circle Nature Playground, PIC is proud to have earned re-certification as an outdoor classroom by the Nature Explore program.

It has been a year filled with hours of rich outdoor learning and play in every season. It has also been a year to see what works (and grows) and what improvements we can make.

While many plantings flourished, several plants simply could not survive the impact of little feet. We will try other plants this fall.

The challenge of encouraging plant growth was a chance to involve teachers and children in problem-solving. Classrooms created stepping stones to be visual reminders of where children can step without hurting any plants.

Our rain garden provided months of beautiful flowers in bloom and introduced children to the importance of sustainability.

We held our first *Fall Family Festival* on the playground where parents engaged in nature play alongside their young learners.

Teachers need time for nature exploration, too. We held two staff in-service days on the playground. PIC teachers led one another in building with sticks, creating nature art, making objects for indoor display from natural materials, and more. We can see an impact on the children's experiences!

We have seen first-hand the profound and positive effect our outdoor classroom has on children. Now with one year under our belt, PIC is even more committed to connecting children with nature.