

MILFORD FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

The Infant and Toddler Times

JUDY LOBDELL, EDITOR

January 2018

Dates to Remember

January 2018

1st. New Year's Day.
Center closed.



2nd. Back to school for
Milford Public Schools

8th. Playgroups
begin



15th. Martin Luther
King Day. Center closed.

February

14th. Valentine's Day



19th - 20th.
Winter Break.
Center closed.



**The Milford Family
Resource Center
@Mathewson School
466 West River Street
Milford, CT 06461
(203)783-3626
mfrc@milforded.org**

**Milford Family Resource
Center Staff::
Program Manager:
Peggy Kelly
Parent Educators:
Kathy Aspinwall
Judy Lobdell
Anne Mundy**

Helping Young Children Make Connections

The process of making connections is important because this helps children structure a framework into which they can place new knowledge or pieces of information and those connections can be made in all aspects of learning. This is an essential skill addressed by Ellen Galinsky in her book, *Mind In The Making*, and it is an important element in the learning process.

In the early years connections have to be made as concrete as possible for children. They need a lot of practice in order to make meaningful connections, and they also need guidance to make them correctly. What causes brain cells to form connections? Genes control some of the process, but experience is also a crucial ingredient. Every time a caregiver interacts with an infant or toddler, connections are formed. Positive interactions with nurturing caregivers profoundly stimulate young brains. This stimulation causes new connections to form neural pathways and strengthens existing ones.



In the first years of life these connections are abundant, but as children grow toward adulthood a number of those connections are eliminated (see picture to the left). This is a natural process and is analogous to pruning a garden so the existing plants have more room to grow stronger. This, however, is not a random process and speaks to the importance of creating a stimulating, nurturing environment, for the connections that remain are those that have been used repeatedly in the early years. Ultimately, this pruning results in a brain that is better wired for the complex tasks and learning that young adults need to accomplish.

In helping your young child build connections, games can play a big role. Caregivers can provide activities that include sorting by shape using a shape sorter or cutouts, by size using three empty containers for sorting big, bigger, biggest, or by color, using a variety of pictures, shapes or household objects such as socks. Another game involves putting 4 items out with 3 the same and one different (eg., 3 strawberries and 1 raspberry, 3 toy cars and 1 truck, or 3 shoes and 1 sock).

The importance of reading to young children should not be underestimated. This interaction creates an awareness between words and sound. It also helps to build a child's vocabulary and understanding of a variety of ideas, concepts and feelings. What better way to explore the world together than cuddling up with your young child and reading a good book. (Page 2 has more ideas for activities)

Quelling Cabin Fever



When the weather turns cold, cabin fever sets in - you know the symptoms: feelings of isolation, restlessness, irritation, and complaints of boredom.

It's a nasty fever that everyone tries to avoid catching. But adults as well as kids can become victims. If you're stuck indoors and crave a change of scenery, try these home remedies for cabin fever.

Put toys and books down where youngsters can reach them. Your children can play without constantly having to seek adult assistance to pull a toy off a high shelf. This builds their independence and self-esteem.

Read, read, read! Snuggle under a blanket or by the fireplace with your children and read to them. Reading builds language and concentration skills. The undivided time with a parent nurtures a child's love of books.

Play games. Preschoolers can begin board games such as Candy Land or Chutes and Ladders. Games teach valuable social skills - taking turns, being patient, and winning and losing gracefully. Learning cognitive skills, such as

color and shape recognition and counting, is a bonus. Card games (try Old Maid) strengthen small hand and finger muscles. Older kids usually enjoy Yahtzee, Chess, Checkers and Trouble.

Pretend. Young children enjoy dressing up and role playing. Provide a basket with old hats, shoes, jewelry, etc. This may be the gentle nudge that young children need for an afternoon of entertainment.

Produce artwork. Use crayons, markers, paper, chalk and chalkboard to stimulate creative juices. For youngsters under 3, avoid coloring books and demands to "color in the lines." Instead, encourage freehand drawings. Phrases such as, "Tell me about your picture" and "You are using red" are more helpful than the standard "I like your picture." When your child finishes her masterpiece, display it on the refrigerator at her eye level.

Cut up catalogs. Use old catalogs or magazines to cut out pictures of people, pets and trees. To encourage cognitive skills, suggest children hunt for pictures of certain colors, shapes or seasons.

Plan playgroups. Model hospitality by inviting playmates to your home. Call friends to visit nearby parks or libraries together. To avoid play disputes, remember that toddlers need multiples of the same toy and plenty of supervision. Older children can play together with a little less supervision, but stay close by if you're needed as a peacemaker.

Strategize an obstacle course. Place large empty boxes on the floor for your child to crawl in, on and through. Create more obstacles by using chairs, step stools, pillows and laundry baskets. Tape pieces of bubble wrap to the floor for children to pop as they run and jump over them. Obstacle courses are a fun outlet for kids to use stored energy, motor skills and imagination.

Pitch a fort. Spread a large sheet across the room. Attach the corners to a sofa or to an armchair so kids can hide under the sheet. A sheet tent is great for private reading or for planning a pretend raid.

Develop a music band. Kids like to make noise, so why not create a channel for them to do so by constructing instruments for a marching band? Empty oatmeal boxes, coffee cans or pots and wooden spoons make perfect drums. Lids from pots and pans can be used for clanging cymbals. Cover one side of a wood block with coarse sandpaper; rub two sandpapered blocks together for sand blocks. Rhythm sticks can be two empty paper towel rolls or rolled up newspaper secured with masking tape. Making music is one way to stimulate brain development and future math skills.

Assemble paper blocks. Recycle large paper grocery bags by stuffing them with crumpled wrapping paper. Fold down the open end of the bag and tape it shut. Enlist older children to help younger ones. These paper blocks are great for jumping or sitting on, tossing and rolling.

Play in the ocean. Fill your bathtub with blue water (using a few drops of blue food coloring), add toys and watch your child's imagination soar. Kids love water, and it's a sneaky way to get them clean. (Food coloring does not turn little ones blue, and it does not stain tubs.) ***And, don't forget to get outdoors when you can...***

Play outside. Build a snowman, go for a sled ride or go for a brisk walk, and then bring in some snow in a pan for a science lesson on the properties of water. A few drops of food coloring can add a new element to the snow, as well.

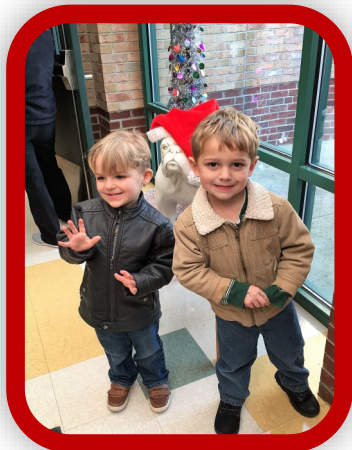




Holiday Concert 2017

with
The Learning
Station

We had great fun!





*A Very Big Thank You
To Our Generous Sponsors*

*THE Milford Bank
Milford Pediatric Group
Bercham, Moses,
and Devlin, LLC*

*And to Santa
and his helpers:
Sarah, Gina, Lauren,
Ana, Thomas,
Annabelle, Keagan, and
Peggy and Cliff O.*

Holiday Concert 2017



Generous Donations for Milford Families from:

On behalf of the families who received gifts through the Milford Family Resource Center Christmas Holiday Gift Program, we thank the following:

*Milford Public Schools Central Office Staff, amazingly coordinated by Peggy Oakes, thank you!
Subway Headquarters Staff for their continued generosity every year to Milford families, thank you!*

St. Mary parishioners, thank you!

Rainbow Gardens, thank you!

Milford Moms Club for thoughtful and generous gifts, thank you!

United Way of Milford for gift cards, thank you!

Toys for Tots, thank you!

As well as several individuals and families (not pictured) who generously contributed gifts to our families

The response from our families was very touching as they came by to collect their gifts.

Please know that each of you has made this Christmas Holiday JOYOUS!

Best wishes to all from the Milford Family Resource Center.



Thank You Subway Employees and Our in-house 'Santa', Jeff



THANK YOU!



Foran High School Students and Staff

To all
our
generous
friends!



Moms Club of Milford



Milford Fire Department and Toys for Tots