

The H-N REACH EarlyON at Home

Nature!
FAMILY NEWSLETTER

GETTING INTO THE OUTDOORS

Welcome back to our second issue of our Family Newsletter! This week will be dedicated to all things outdoors, and will give you some great ideas to do together outside with the whole family.

Did you know there's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing choices? As hard as that is to believe, especially after weeks of snow, rain and sunshine, it especially plays true during our social distancing measures. Being at home all the time does not have to mean staying inside. According to research, getting outside and into the fresh air will help decrease blood pressure, lower stress hormones, and will increase that feel-good neurotransmitter 'dopamine'. When children go outside, the areas of the brain that become active are the same areas of the brain that are linked to learning, and it even increases the focus in children with attention difficulties. With all there is to gain from going outside, you have nothing to lose by taking your children out to play!!

To learn more about the benefits of playing outside, check out Linda McGurk's book "There's No Such Thing as Bad Weather" (2018, Touchstone Publishing, New York).



CELEBRATING NATURE!

Nature is all around us no matter where we live. Just look outside, observing nature through the eyes of your child. You will see the world in a whole new way! Follow your child's lead and let them dig in the dirt, play in the mud and splash in the puddles. Slow down and be present. Take a blanket outside and sprawl out together, watching the clouds float by.

Perhaps you could go for a walk and encourage your child to use their senses. Talk about what you see, what you hear, what you smell and what you feel. You never know what they might find! Do you notice new buds on the trees? Can you hear the birds singing? Do you notice their different songs? What do you smell? Ask your child to collect sticks, rocks and leaves and watch as your child discovers unique ways to use them in their play.

You can make your nature walk even more fun by doing a Scavenger Hunt. Perhaps you can use your treasure to create a masterpiece? Did you know you can use rocks, twigs, flowers or leaves to paint with? Take lots of pictures, be curious about what they are doing, ask them lots of questions, "What do you have there?", and join them on the journey of discovering the world around them!

HOW DO YOU KNOW THE OCEAN IS FRIENDLY?
IT WAVES!

MAKING NESTS!

Have you ever wondered how birds can make such intricate nests? Check out these videos and discover how birds use their beaks and feet to make their homes. Can your child create something using their feet? It might be fun to try!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aupSONdl7W0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbWM1QAVGzs>



RECYCLED WATER BOTTLE BIRD FEEDER

What you need:

- Plastic water bottle (empty, of course!)
 - Plastic spoon (or real one, if you never want it back again!)
 - Sharp knife
1. About 2 inches from the bottom of a clean, dry plastic bottle, cut a slit at the front and the back.
 2. Slide a spoon through the bottle so the spoon part stays on the outside of the bottle and the handle of the spoon goes through the middle of the bottle. This creates a perch for our feathered friends.
 3. Cut a small hole a couple inches above the spoon, big enough for the bird to collect the seed.
 4. Fill the bottle with bird seed and seal tightly.
 5. Tie a piece of yarn around the top of the bottle and hang!

THE READING NOOK



Looking for a list of books about our environment? Look no more - we've found some great books for you to read with your child! Why not read outside!!

Compost Stew by Mary McKenna Siddals

Earth Day - Hooray! by Stuart J. Murphy

The Earth Book by Todd Parr

Curious George Plants a Tree by H. A. Rey

What Does It Mean to be Green by Rana DiOrio

Michael Recycle by Ellie Bethel

I Am Earth by James McDonald

Check out these links to free stories online and listen anytime!

<https://stories.audible.com/discovery>

<http://www.magickeys.com/books/>

<https://monkeypen.com/pages/free-childrens-books>

<https://www.storyjumper.com/book/search>

APRIL SHOWERS BRING MAY FLOWERS - AND MUD!!!

That's right - the sticky, squishy, dirty stuff that children love to jump and play in! You may be wondering "Why should I let my child play in the mud?" Here are some reasons we'll share:

- Exploring through the senses can be calming and relaxing for children. Feeling the smooth texture of mud in their hands may be soothing.
- Playing in mud is open-ended. There's no right or wrong way to do it! This builds your child's confidence, allows them to express their creativity and feel in control of the activity.
- Playing with mud allows your child to feel a sense of connectedness to nature and the world around them.

Try out some of these ideas to extend your child's play in the mud:

- **Mud Kitchen:** Bring out some pots, pans, and utensils and allow your child to become a mud chef
- **Mud Blocks:** Put some mud in ice cube trays and freeze ahead of time to create blocks with the mud
- **Mud Painting:** Bring out some paper and paintbrushes and you have a simple alternative to paint
- **Car Wash:** Bring cars, trucks, or any other toys into the mud. Once they're all muddy, take them to the 'car wash' in a bucket of soapy water

For more ideas about muddy fun, check out <https://www.unley.sa.gov.au/CityOfUnley/media/CoU-Media-Library/community%20and%20culture/Events/Mud-Play/Benefits-and-Activities.pdf>



GROW YOUR OWN!

Did you know you can grow your own fruits and vegetables from the ones that are already in your kitchen?

This is a great way to experiment in the kitchen with the kids - you can even take pictures throughout the process to see how it grows!!

Try these cool ideas:

Sweet Potatoes: Lodge a sweet potato in a container such as a mason jar half filled with water. Once new roots have grown 3 to 4 inches, transfer to soil.

Pineapple: Try and remove the crown by twisting and pulling by the leaves so that the stalk is still attached. Ensure there is no flesh on the stalk and remove some of the lower leaves. Place the crown stalk down in a bowl of water and once the roots form (3 - 4 weeks), transfer to a pot of soil. This is a slow growing plant and it could take 2 years before you get a pineapple.

Romaine Lettuce: Leave around 2 inches of stump on the heart of the lettuce, place in a bowl half filled with water, and after a few days of new leaf growth, transfer to soil.

Garlic: Place a clove of garlic in a little water and once it's sprouted 2 to 3 inches, transfer into soil. Alternatively, you can place the clove directly into the soil.

Tomatoes: Slice your tomato and place a slice on top of some soil in a pot. Cover with another inch of soil. Cover the container with plastic wrap for warmth, and within a week, you should see it sprout!



RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Baking together in the kitchen is a great way to connect with your child. Check out this recipe – a simple recipe with an easy clean-up and endless memories!

Yummy Chocolate Chip Banana Muffins

1 1/2 cups all purpose flour
1/3 cup melted butter
1 tsp vanilla
1/4 tsp salt
1 tsp baking soda
3 to 4 ripe bananas (3 large bananas, or 4 medium)
1/2 cup white granulated sugar
1/4 cup packed brown sugar
1 egg
1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips



1. Preheat oven to 350'. Grease a muffin pan or use cupcake liners.
2. Mash your bananas. Then, add your egg, vanilla, salt, baking soda, white and brown sugars and butter. Mix well. Now you add your flour a 1/2 cup at a time. Lastly, add the semi-sweet chocolate chips and mix well.
3. Pour your mix into your muffin pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 18 minutes (ovens may vary, so keep your eyes on it). Makes approximately 18 muffins, or one loaf.

This recipe was brought to you by The Frugal Sisters, www.thefrugalsisters.com/chocolate-chip-banana-muffins/



WE ARE STILL HERE FOR YOU!

Yes, things have changed a lot over the past month, but we are still here to help! Haldimand-Norfolk REACH is considered an essential service, and even though our sites are closed, we are working at home to stay connected with everyone, and to help those in need during these turbulent times.

If you or your child are in crisis, our Child and Youth Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 1-866-327-3224

Feel free to find us on Facebook – we are the Haldimand-Norfolk REACH EarlyON Child and Family Centre! We're always posting activity ideas, circle time videos and stories, and tips to stay healthy at home.

Have an idea you'd like to see us try? Email us at earlyon@hnreach.on.ca