Since the dawn of humanity, children have enjoyed and benefitted from playing outdoors — day after day, year after year — amidst the richest, most diverse, most dynamic environment they are ever likely to encounter. This nature-based play has always stimulated children’s development across all the developmental domains: cognitive, social, emotional, creative, physical, and spiritual. Sadly, the nature of childhood has changed dramatically over the past three decades. Children now spend about 30 minutes a week in unstructured outdoor play, while digital media consumes over 40 hours of their time each week.

The consequences of these changes are disastrous for a child’s well-being: one-in-five 4 year olds in the U.S. is clinically obese; behavioral challenges associated with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder are on the rise; the measured creativity of American children has been steadily declining for two decades, while academic performance of U.S. students continues to fall further behind our global competitors – despite two decades of “school reform” initiatives. Our society’s recent, more-focused attention on closing the achievement gap has led to well-intentioned but counter-productive efforts that subject very young children to premature academic instruction and inappropriate testing, while neglecting their vital, holistic development.

There is a growing movement in the U.S. to counter this current toxic childhood environment. In a small but increasing number of preschools, early childhood educators are partnering with environmental educators to use hands-on, direct experiences of nature play as the central organizing theme of their curriculum.

Emerging research indicates that there are enormous benefits for young children who participate in these programs.

This fall I had the enormous privilege of attending a conference on children and nature in Scandinavia. I saw many wonderful things, but my most important learning was seeing a whole different approach to childhood…an approach that includes:

- Letting kids try hard things and experience the thrill of victory along with the benefits of struggle.
- Trusting children to be out of your sight and autonomous for increasing time and distance as their abilities and responsibility grow.
- Believing that play truly is the primary way children learn, and giving them rich and diverse opportunities for free play in natural settings.

This issue of Connection explores the theme of nature and play. There are articles on a nature preschool at the Schuylkill Environmental Center, the Zoo’s new environment for young children, reflections of two urban teachers on incorporating nature play into their program, and an exciting new vision for a nature preschool at Smith Playground. Photos scattered throughout provide an illustrated tour of the research findings on nature play (for sources, go to Nature Kindergartens and Forest Preschools by Claire Warden).

We also announce the beginning of a new DVAEYC study group on nature play, and provide a sneak preview of our spring conference, Take a Walk on the Wild Side. If these ideas ignite your passion or spark your curiosity, then you MUST join us for the 2014 Conference. But be forewarned – we aim to engage you in a new movement: a movement to bring joy, discovery, imagination, creativity, and yes, nature back to childhood.

**7 Reasons to Start a Nature-Based Preschool**

1. **It capitalizes on children’s innate interest in the natural world, and nurtures their imagination and sense of wonder.**

   - Nature-based programs capitalize on children’s natural curiosity and love for the outdoors, providing them with opportunities to learn through play in a natural setting.
   - They encourage children to explore and interact with the natural world, fostering an appreciation for nature and the environment.
   - Nature-based programs often incorporate outdoor activities, such as gardening, hiking, and camping, which can be both fun and educational.

2. **Provides a holistic approach to early childhood education.**

   - Nature-based programs often integrate the natural world into all aspects of the curriculum, including literacy, math, science, and social studies.
   - They provide children with a rich and diverse range of experiences that can help them develop a strong foundation for future learning.

3. **Supports physical and mental health.**

   - Nature-based programs often include activities that promote physical activity, such as hiking, climbing, and playing in the sand or mud.
   - They also offer opportunities for children to engage in creative play, such as building with sticks or playing with mud, which can help reduce stress and promote emotional well-being.

4. **Encourages social and emotional development.**

   - Nature-based programs provide opportunities for children to interact with others in a natural setting, fostering social skills and empathy.
   - They also encourage children to develop their ability to regulate their emotions, as they learn to cope with the challenges of the natural world.

5. **Promotes environmental literacy.**

   - Nature-based programs often include activities and lessons that help children understand the importance of taking care of the environment.
   - They provide children with opportunities to observe and understand the natural world, helping them develop a sense of responsibility and a commitment to protecting the environment.

6. **Fosters a love for learning.**

   - Nature-based programs can help children develop a love for learning, as they are encouraged to explore and discover the natural world through hands-on activities.
   - They provide children with opportunities to learn through play, which can be more engaging and effective than traditional classroom-based learning.

7. **Supports family engagement.**

   - Nature-based programs often involve families in the learning process, as they are encouraged to participate in outdoor activities with their children.
   - They provide opportunities for families to spend quality time together, building strong relationships and creating lasting memories.

Nature-based programs offer children a unique and valuable educational experience that can help them develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in life. By providing children with opportunities to explore and interact with the natural world, nature-based programs can help them become well-rounded, responsible, and environmentally conscious adults.
DVAEYC and Smith Playground are laying the foundation for an exciting new venture to harness the magic and power of nature. The goal is a unique new resource for preschoolers and families from the neighborhoods in North Philadelphia around Smith: a nature preschool and training center.

Adults who grew up in a time when outdoor play was a part of daily life are shocked to learn that on average American children spend just 1% of their time outside — and 27% of the day in front of digital media. This dramatic shift in their daily lives has detrimental health and developmental impacts on children — and in particular on those children living under the burden of chronic, persistent poverty.

This nature preschool will use Smith’s wooded grounds as the focus of its student activities. Every day, children will go outside where explorations and discoveries will guide their learning and stimulate their developmental needs: intellectual, creative, physical, social, and emotional. The dynamic diversity and sensory richness of nature can inspire children’s learning in ways that no fancy classroom or elaborate lesson plan can ever match!

Nature preschools have begun to thrive in affluent areas. But not one U.S. nature preschool offers the year-round, full-day programming needed by families in high-poverty urban neighborhoods. This is both an injustice and a missed opportunity! We are determined to bring this state-of-the-art educational practice to children from North Philadelphia neighborhoods like Strawberry Mansion, located just minutes from Smith.

The second element of this initiative is to use the nature preschool as a “lab school” for the purpose of training local early childhood education practitioners in developmentally appropriate practice. DVAEYC has long sought an opportunity to create a model school for this purpose. We are in conversation with local universities about partnering to collect impact data from the project, to be used to document child outcomes and improve early childhood education locally and nationally.

International research has found that frequent, unstructured childhood play in "wild" settings is the most common influence on life-long conservation values. Thus, nature preschools support both holistic child development and the foundations of environmental concern — two entwined goals, since a healthy environment is crucial for a healthy childhood. With Smith Playground’s strong 114-year-old tradition of free play on 6.5 beautiful acres in East Fairmount Park, and DVAEYC’s almost 50 years of championing quality early childhood education, we think we have a winning team that can make this dream come true.

Khadijah: I was changed by our visit to Charlestown Playhouse! Now I understand learning through play in a whole new way. With their outdoor play space, the children had the ability to learn through nature and the freedom to explore where they wanted to. They learned social skills through play. Once they knew the rules and knew how to respect each other, teaching was easy. How they interacted with each other was amazing. Nobody was hollering. When there was a problem the teachers invited people to come over and talk.

They had an outdoor sand and water table, so they didn’t have to take stuff out. They had an old tire on a tree that you could swing from. There was hardly any new outdoor equipment or fancy padding. They said the natural padding from the grass and leaves is safer. Even though we think we need all this equipment, we could use what nature provides. They had a little pit where they made a fire, and the benches around it were made out of logs. There were different kinds of trees and space for a whole garden. The children collected leaves and made piles and rolled down the hills. In the wintertime they can go sliding down a hill. It was fenced in so it was safe, but there was so much space that there was no fighting. If a child wanted to be left alone, they could go sit under a tree.

Inside I saw kids learning. The parents collected things like milk cartons, boxes and cans for projects. Everybody had a chance to play a part in a project, then they could leave. They could go through the whole center, using anything from any corner of the program. They had a space with large-sized blocks, and enough blocks so they could build a city. They
were that creative. One child made an office there, going to the dramatic play area for a chair, and using an old typewriter and paper. They didn’t have fancy anything: everything was real. I could count on one hand the stuff they had from a place like Beckers. When it was time to clean up, they put the blocks right back, and you would never know a whole city had been there. Where we would be scared and say, “Oh no they might get hurt”, they gave the children a chance to try. The ratio was better, so they had the freedom to do things with marbles and hammers and nails.

Everything they did in the classroom was connected to the outside. The same kind of thing we do inside, they do outside. They did artwork from the leaves and other outside nature projects. They took whole lessons outside. They ate outside. The kids didn’t want to come in. One class stayed out the whole day, going from the outside straight home.

It’s harder in the city. Our kids have this little outdoor space, and everyone is worried that they’ll get their clothes dirty. We limit what we can do because we’re so busy keeping them safe. But now we’re staying outside more. When we came back, we let the kids sweep the leaves, then collected them and used them for arts and crafts. We usually make a thankful tree from paper, but this time we took a branch from a tree that we found. We’ve started taking more walks. There’s a tree around the corner that has acorns, and we let the kids just sit there and pick up acorns. I’ve decided that there’s enough space outside to build a garden in the spring.

When I came back, we changed our whole philosophy, to concentrate on social skills. If the children can’t interact with each other, we can’t teach them anything. We’re learning to talk with them more, let them have more choices and give them more time to play, rather than always moving them to another center. Some of the STARS requirements limit your freedom to do what you really want to do, but we just let them do more things, and supervise them right there. We’re modeling respect for each other and for the teachers, and the parents are reinforcing it at home.

I just wish that we had a big place where child care programs could go, like when we go to the Please Touch Museum, so we could bring a little part of Charlestown Playhouse back to the city. Awbury Arboretum has a whole trail where kids can walk through nature and pick up different kinds of rocks and just play in the grass. We could go there more often. I want our kids in the inner city to have more space to be able to learn through nature, to go outside and be in the fresh air, run around if they want to, roll down a hill, or plant a garden. They really need it.

Ikeema: The first thing that really impressed me was the unspoken attitude of respect. Teachers let the children work out problems on their own rather than solving them for them. Even the two year olds were working things out. They had the time and the freedom to go into an area and stay there if they wanted to. Nobody was pulling them out. One little girl stayed in the sand and water area for the whole time because she was so engaged.

In my center, we seem to be scared to let kids just play and have fun. They want to go outside and dig a hole and play with leaves, but we want them to go home as clean as when they came in. We’re always saying “No, don’t pick that up, don’t touch that!” We end up avoiding doing things altogether. I think we’re cheating them. You can always wash your hands. We’ve been discussing having the parents just bring in old clothes, so if the children want to dig or explore, they can. They have acres and acres of land at Charlestown and we don’t have that luxury, but if we just eased up on our restraints and gave them a little more time to engage in their interests, that would help.
Kristen Waldron, Director of Conservation Education

Take a walk on the wild side with the Philadelphia Zoo

The Philadelphia Zoo, the region’s largest living classroom, welcomes DVAEYC to its newest attraction, the KidZooU: Hamilton Family Children’s Zoo & Faris Family Education Center. KidZooU, opened in April 2013, is a new wildlife academy that unites a world-view education center with an up-close and personal children’s zoo.

The interactive exhibits of the North Gallery show how tropical butterflies, Australian parakeets and coral reef fish can thrive into the future if we all commit to easy changes at home, school and work. The South Gallery showcases ordinary creatures in an extraordinary ways and encourages children to have purposeful play to develop a deeper appreciation of these animals. Outside is a farm-themed area designated just for children ages 1-3, providing the Zoo’s youngest visitors with a soft and safe area to explore nature. Other outdoor highlights include the original barnyard, stable and duck pond, a goat bridge and climbing tower, and a pigeon loft.

With our pigeon and ant exhibits, we decided to look at “familiar surprises”, inviting children to think about these common animals differently, and have a deeper appreciation for them. We created an environment of parallel play, where children can take child-sized larvae and pupae to their nest area, and seeds to the eating area, just the way the ants do, and explore and play with their baby ants and seeds in the underground chambers.

Working toward a universal design—so that regardless of your age or ability this becomes a welcoming environment where you can be actively engaged—was new territory for us. We are proud of how we can engage very young children and children on the autism spectrum to learn about these animals without any

It encourages health, agility and fitness, and counteracts sedentary lifestyles and the epidemics of childhood diabetes, obesity, attention deficit disorder, and depression.
I vividly remember traveling to the annual NAEYC conference a few years ago, attending my very first workshop on connecting children to nature, and hearing all of the new research in this area. While I have always loved bringing children to nature, I had never thought about the concept of a “nature playground” or of the importance of sustained nature connections. Attending that single workshop led to a complete change in my own thinking about what a playground can be and about how nature can be incorporated in all classrooms, at every age level. Now, recently back from the 2013 NAEYC conference, it is so clear to me how the concept of “nature play” has caught on around the country. This year there were countless workshops, and those sessions were standing-room-only!

This is clearly the new “hot topic” in early childhood education. I find myself reading everything I can find on the topic. Since spending time in conversation with others who share a similar interest and passion is the greatest motivator that I know, I am delighted that DVAEYC has taken the initiative to begin a new Children and Nature Study Group. Through the study group, we will gather those interested in this topic to share ideas and resources, and to hopefully visit local programs where we know wonderful things are happening.

You may be bringing natural materials into your classroom, designing an outdoor classroom, or building nature experiences into your curriculum. Whatever you are thinking and doing about kids and nature, others want to know and discover more. Each month we will gather to network, and share ideas and best practices. Come help us build this community of practice, and be a part of this dynamic group!

Nature Study Group
First Gathering: January 15 from 6 to 8 PM
Parent-Infant Center (PIC)
4205 Spruce Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
Debbie Green, Executive Director of the Parent-Infant Center, facilitator
Peg Szczurek, Associate Director of DVAEYC, host

With DVAEYC’s current theme of nature exploration, I can’t think of a better time to collaborate and work together to make sure we provide our young children with the chances they need to explore the outdoors, so they can become the next generation of earth stewards. We are looking forward to hosting a DVAEYC member night at the Zoo in the spring. We are very proud of what DVAEYC does in the early childhood community, and couldn’t think of a better way to say thank you than to invite you to take a walk on the wild side here at the Zoo.
I feel so fortunate to be the director of the new Schuylkill Center Nature Preschool. The children are inspired by the woods and the changing landscape, and their questions shape our curriculum, which is heartwarming and motivational for me as a teacher. The opportunities are endless, and to be outdoors as a teacher every day is so joyful. As part of the Schuylkill Center, I have a wealth of resources on hand, including our 340 acres of natural habitats, nature experts with a deep knowledge of the ecosystem, and birds that can visit the classroom from the Wildlife Clinic.

The children are learning and growing in all developmental areas, physical, social, emotional and cognitive. Every day they are challenging their bodies as they climb trees, jump from log to log, and balance along a bridge or a pathway. They're able to have an outlet for their emotions as they feel a sense of freedom and independence in their environment, and their self-confidence grows. The other day as we were headed toward the stream, we came across a fallen tree that was elevated a little bit, resting on another log. It was amazing to see some children balancing readily as they walked sideways along it. Others sat down and scooched across. You could see the hesitation in their bodies and then how they became able to take those risks in a way they were ready for. When they succeeded, their faces just lit up—they were so proud of themselves!

Being outdoors promotes collaboration and positive conflict resolution. Two children wanted to adventure through a brushy area, but one of them kept stopping. Her friend noticed she was nervous to step over the brush, so one child held it aside as her friend walked by. Experiencing nature together seems to facilitate respect and kindness.

Teachable moments abound; as a teacher you’re always finding ways of including content area. In the fall, as we walk along the trails their attention is drawn to the different colors of the trees. This builds their color classification skills in a very connected way. I take in the big picture as we walk, but the children find all these little creatures and bugs. So we began a study on insects—and now we have a whole wall on what makes an insect, and we can classify a millipede or a praying mantis. They are very kind as we interact with these little creatures along the paths. When it was a little warmer, we found 20 praying mantises, because the children know how to take their time. The only problem is that there is so much! The children are so engaged and curious about everything around us, how can I incorporate it all into the curriculum in a meaningful way?

I didn’t anticipate the opportunity I would get to learn along with the children. Their questions sometimes stump me, which gives me the motivation to research deeper. I've become much more knowledgeable about the plants, animals and processes that are such an important part of our world. To be moving around every day is great for their bodies, but also for mine. Could I ask for anything better?

Aside from daily clothing changes, the biggest challenge is making the curriculum appropriate for all the children across a range of experience and readiness. It’s great to see them learning from each other, daring to touch something they might not have touched before. As they continue to engage in these experiences, they are becoming more independent and willing to try something new.

I actually look forward to our rainy days. With the chance to explore textures and worms, they provide a different setting for our investigation. Play on one rainy morning grew from puddle splashing to a whole dramatic play scenario. The children all began gathering and counting sticks and sharing them, then putting on imaginary worms. One person took on the role of the boat mechanic so everybody could go on their fishing adventure.

We’re so lucky to have these resources. But if you don’t have access to the big outdoors, you can still use the natural assets that you do have around you. Do a study of the one oak tree. Examine your grassy patch. Use stink bugs as a teachable moment. Visit the same spot every day and see how it changes. Don’t overlook things. Appreciate the small pieces and slow down because you never know what you might find.
is the theme of DVAEYC’s 2014 Conference, March 21-22 at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. Network and shop during break times and lunch each day. Prices are the same as last year - Registration is now open. Best savings is the early bird member community will be in attendance for practitioners to access during the conference. Join two well-known author/illustrators, Ken Wirth, Earthplay; Natural Playscapes and adventure play and Patti Bailie, Nature Preschool Consultant; environmental education and nature-based curriculum. Ken will follow his keynote address with an additional workshop on Friday afternoon. Many Kinds of Smart! Understanding the Theory of Multiple Intelligence. In addition to her keynote address, Lisa will present two workshops on Saturday afternoon.

**Keynotes**

**Friday:** Ken Finch, Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood

RESTORING THE NATURE OF CHILDHOOD

Ken will follow his keynote address with an additional workshop on Friday afternoon.

**Saturday:** Lisa Murphy, the Ooey Gooey Lady®

**Many Kinds of Smart! Understanding the Theory of Multiple Intelligence**

In addition to her keynote address, Lisa will present two workshops on Saturday afternoon.

**Featured Presenters**

- **Patti Bailie**, Nature Preschool Consultant; environmental education and nature-based curriculum
- **Kenny Ballentine**, The Nature Kids Institute; screening nature documentary, Nature Kids
- **Rusty Keeler**, Earthplay; Natural Playscapes and adventure play
- **Susie Wirth**, Nature Explore Outreach Director; art and nature connections
- **Katherine Lyons**, Wolf Trap Institute Teaching Artist; story experiences for infants and toddlers

**Children’s Book Authors**

Join two well-known author/illustrators, Lindsay Barrett and Mónica Carnesi at their workshops. Develop skills to share stories about nature and animals! Celebrate the power of books!

**ECE Exhibits**

Over 50 vendors with the latest products and services for the early childhood community will be in attendance for practitioners to access during the conference. Network and shop during break times and lunch each day.

Prices are the same as last year - Registration is now open. Best savings is the early bird member rate until February 18th! Visit www.dvaeyc.org for more details and information.

**sharedsourcepa.org**

DVAEYC members have FREE access to sharedsourcepa.org, a web platform designed to help you save time, energy and money. Three new organizations have dedicated themselves to providing YOU with discounts on products that we need to serve our children.

- **Childcraft** brings you innovative supplemental products and furniture for students from pre-kindergarten through grade three.
- **Abilitations** products provide you with solutions for balance, mobility, positioning, play, communication, sensory solutions, fine motor, and body works.
- **School Specialty** is your spot for the best discount school supplies and teaching supplies available. Our school marketplace has over 80,000 products from great names like School Smart, 3M, Crayola, Elmer’s, Post-It, and Bic.

Log onto today to save with these NEW vendors in the cost savings tab! If you have questions on how you can use this FREE benefit, email tyrone@dvaeyc.org

**Membership Matters**

**DVAEYC membership now stands at 2,042.**

Thank you to the 361 members who renewed their DVAEYC membership since August. Welcome to our 188 new DVAEYC members:

- Jillian Adler
- Katie Baker
- Leann Beaudoin
- Karina Beckett
- Glendora Belamy
- Ashley Belleveau
- Stacy Blackshear
- Erica Bolger
- David Bradgett
- Amy Brady
- Jamisa Breeden
- Jessica Breelin
- Melanie Brew
- Julia Brooks
- Sarita Brown
- Lisa Brown
- Angela Brown
- Stephanie Lynn Bucci
- Lauren Bull
- Kelley Burnett
- Phylli Butler-Delobato
- Julie Carroll
- Marybeth Carroll
- Christina Celia
- Diane Clafey
- Aliza Coleman
- Kahreemah Coleman
- Stacey Condeelis
- Emily Cooper
- Jeanneine Corse
- Emily Frances Corryl
- Erin Crawford
- Veronica Crisp
- Lourdes Cruz
- Chelsea Czarnecki
- Susan Dagdigian
- Megan David
- Paige Davis
- Erin Decker
- Lauren Delgash
- Sherri DeSimone
- Lexi Difrancesco
- Nancy Dingman
- Allison Durkin
- Elizabeth Eager
- Jennifer Fink Hackett
- Victoria Ellis
- Leah Esmonde
- Susan Everett
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- Cassandra R Felder
- Sherri Fickenscher
- David Finzmer
- Theresa Finkmers
- Beth Fox
- Diana Garcia
- Christian George
- Maureen Giacum
- Kim Ginn
- Nancy E Gober
- Rebecca Goldstein
- Teresa I Gooden
- Donna M Guede
- Katie Hamilton
- Christina Hanley
- Staci Harris
- Jacqueline Hart
- Noelle Kristina Heaton
- Jennifer Honey
- Tada Hill
- Ashley Holiday
- Beth Huertas
- Danielle Renee Hutchinson
- Abigail M James
- Connie Jarrett
- Lori Jett
- Gloria Jones
- Nicole Jones
- Peach Jones
- Sarah Kenean
- Patricia Kennedy
- Marie Kenyon
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- Holly Kreider
- Teresa Kulp-Weber
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- Jayne Lampugani
- Heather Laputka
- Jill Law
- Denise Lawson
- Sabrina Lear
- Whitney Ann Lebeouf
- Mei-Hsiung Lei
- Kristen M Lemon
- Emily Levy
- Kathrina Ulricky Luckett
- Ashley Marie Lupino
- Kimberly Macdonald
- Chelsea Maloney
- Devin Manion
- Jack Marine
- Krystle Mayberry
- Kathryn McBride
- Jacquana McBride
- Thomas McCarty
- Tori McDaniel
- Teressa McFarland
- Jean McFadden
- Nadine McMichael
- Mary Mengel
- Ginamaria Meyers
- Sherrell Mckenz
- Alice Mills
- Dawn Monroe-Smith
- Ashley Moore
- Jillian Morgan
- Linda Moser
- Sandra Muneton
- Colleen Myers
- Manal Nachef
- Leslie Neely
- Kristen Newman
- Claribel Nieves
- Brittany Nixon
- Mary O’Donnell
- Shannon O’Neill
- Margaret Osby Salley
- Joan Otrum
- Amy Padula
- Jill Page
- Joanna Pagliaro
- Heather Palt

**Andonecia Parrish**
- Karen Patton
- Adriana Pettinelli
- Yvonne Phillips
- Amanda Pavilus
- Lalene Price
- Tanesha Pride
- Jana Ringer
- Michael Robinson
- Gina Rokowski
- Fran Rose
- Christina Ruda
- Michael Schatz
- Gerald Schatz
- Monica Schultz
- Kenneth Seba
- Kathleen seeley
- Cynthia Shaler
- Elizabeth Shields
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- Michele Singh
- Joseph Sirbak
- Tanya Solomon
- Allison Solomon
- Deborah Soto
- REINE Spade
- Debbie Stough
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- Andrea Flynn
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- Luz Vasquez
- Elizabeth Vassallo
- Nicole Vonsahme
- Tierra Walker
- Melissa Walton
- Kaleah Washington
- Katelyn Weaver
- Joy Weems
- Amy Wertz
- India White
- Matte Wilkinson
- Judith Williams
- Lydia Wrog
- Kelsey Velicanin
- Jenny Yozum
- Melody Yowell
- Leah Zabari
- Amy Zipkin

Be sure your current membership is valid through the end of March 2014 to be able to benefit from the Early Bird Conference rate.

**Enjoy your Member Benefits:**

- Bi-Monthly DVAEYC newsletter, Connection
- Bi-Weekly DVAEYC electronic newsletter, eConnection
- NAECY Journal
- Discounts on DVAEYC Conference and trainings
- Discounts on NAECY Conference
- 20% discount on products in NAECY’s catalog/store
- Free Membership to SharedSource PA
- Receive 15% discount at any of Becker’s Parent/Teacher Stores when you show your membership card.
The voice of early childhood education

DVAEYC champions high quality early care and education for all young children (birth-eight) in Southeastern Pennsylvania through professional development, advocacy, and public engagement.

Patricia Baxter,
President
Sharon Easterling,
Executive Director
Pamela Haines,
Connection Editor

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Connection Editor

Please consider DVAEYC when making your United Way contribution
Donor Option #4549

Who: DVAEYC; long-time partners PCCY, the statewide AEYCs, PA Head Start and Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children; Fight Crime Invest in Kids and Mission Readiness, with their law enforcement and military allies; and the local United Way and Economy League, with all their business partners.

What: A public/private model; roll-out phased to align with provider capacity and reach the highest need first; based on research findings on the components of high quality.

Where: All over the state!

When: Starting with a January 23 launch, with 2014 focused on educating electoral candidates so that our new governor will be a strong ECE supporter, and 2015 focused on getting good legislation on the books.

How: With your help! Hold January 23, then be prepared to educate the candidates, get out the vote, and help develop a plan that’s smart about quality measures, workforce support, financing, ways to drive demand to quality, and ongoing support of quality for infants and toddlers.

Why: Because of the scientific logic, the social foresight, and the moral imperative of investing in our youngest children!

A demonstration site for teacher training could transform the regional landscape of early childhood education practice.