

It is important to provide the right foundation in the brain from the beginning. So, let's set it up for success EARLY.

Positive early experiences are essential for later success in school. Services to very young children and their caregivers who have or are at risk for developmental delays have been shown to positively impact outcomes across ALL developmental domains. This leads to a decreased need for special education in the school age years. When children and families are supported in the first years, they are better equipped for school. So, let's get supports in there EARLY.

The Infant and Toddler Connection of Fairfax-Falls Church is the local provider of EARLY intervention. We are here to provide the supports and services to you so you can help your baby learn best during the work that they do every day. You see, a baby brain is not relaxing, it is very, very busy. That is why early is not only better, but the best.

Have a wonderful Fall and Winter with your children. Watch those wheels turning in their little heads. Rest assured that here at ITC we are always advocating to make the services we provide you and your children the very best they can be.

For further information on why Early matters please refer to:

<http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/importanceofearlyintervention.pdf>

Susan Sigler, CCC-SLP

Director, Infant and Toddler Connection of Fairfax-Falls Church



ITC at Cox Farms

By: Mia Batson, Family Support Liaison

On September 28, 2018 Infant Toddler Connection hosted over 100 families at the pumpkin patch at Cox Farms' Fall Festival. With over 300 people in attendance, and 20 staff present, this was ITC's largest event of the fall season. ITC children and their families participated in hay rides, played in the corn sandbox, and went down the slides on burlap sacks. Families got to feed and pet the goats in the goat village,



and participate in a cow milking show, as well. During their visit, ITC hosted a meet-up area in the Cox Farms playground for families to connect with each other. "We loved getting to meet other families at

the Kiddie Zone at Cox! And our daughter loved the slides so much - we'll surely get back to Cox every year now," shared an ITC parent. Cox Farms provided the complimentary admission tickets, a generous donation



they've provided for nearly a decade. Utilizing a community grant, Cox Farms waives the admission fee annually for ITC families, in the last week of September. "This is an event that families look forward to every year. And as a staff member, it's one of the most fun events of the year! We love seeing our families enjoy themselves, and we love sharing in the experience," said Family and Support Liaison Benae Casino after the event.



PAWSitive Playtime

By: Ilse Rothenberg, Family Support Liaison

This past Fall, the Infant & Toddler Connection Program (ITC) offered a fantastic opportunity in the Northern and Southern areas of Fairfax County. Southgate Community Center (Reston) and Huntington Community Center (Alexandria) opened their doors for PAWSitive Playtime. Thirty-one families were selected via lottery for this 4-week, animal assisted interaction program. The stars



of the program were Pika, a cute Maltese / Poodle / Chihuahua mix and Jolene, a big, loveable, yellow Lab. However, some may argue the real stars were the children. In the end, there was no need to argue because they were all "stars" during this exciting program.

Each week, staff from ITC, the community center and Therapeutic Recreation, together with staff from Healing House and the dogs, came together at the centers for 45 minutes of play between children (ranging in age from 18 - 36 months), dogs and caregivers. Healing House is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the lives of children with special needs through the use of Animal Assisted interactions. During the sessions, parents and caregivers were encouraged to be active partici-



pants. Children were encouraged to explore, move, and interact with one another and their furry friends. Some children even came ready for playtime with their stuffed animals in hand. Too cute! Several parents commented to staff that they would hear about "the doggies" all week long in anticipation of the event.

Children are curious and love to ask questions. During PAWSitive Playtime they were able to ask questions and actively explore the various stations around the room. Children were also able to practice their gross and fine motor skills. Some of the activities included a dress up station, where the children could dress up the dogs and brush their hair. In addition, taking care of an animal is fantastic learning experience so the children were able to take care of Pika and Jolene during the sessions. Children could choose to walk the dogs, or put treats in their dog dish. This made our little ones feel important and encouraged a sense of inde-

pendence. Participants also learned valuable skills such as waiting for your turn and being gentle with their animal friends. Other stations included going through hoops and tunnels, passing a ball back and forth with the dogs, and even going down a slide with the dog. All the while, experienced dog handlers and Early Intervention Specialists were present modeling interesting ways for children to engage with the dogs.

Each weekly session ended with story time, led by Mary Marchetti, OTR/L of ITC. The children then said good bye to the doggies until the following week. In this setting, where families participated for four consecutive weeks, parents and caregivers also had the valuable opportunity to interact with one another. ITC plans to offer PAWSitive Playtime again this Winter in the East and West regions of the county.





Emergency Preparedness Event
By: **Benae Casino, Family Support Liaison**

“Wee, Woo! Wee, Woo!” You hear the sound blaring in the background. Don’t be alarmed, there’s not a fire. It’s merely the firetruck at ITC with a toddler in the front seat, pretending to drive. This was a common and delightful scene at the Emergency Preparedness Event hosted by ITC on November 3rd at the Joseph Willard Health Center. Toddlers and family members alike enjoyed the chance to explore the truck and honk the horn. They got double the fun with an ambulance parked just alongside, with a stretcher in the back.



This special event was a joint partnership with the Office of Emergency Management to learn how to keep our little ones safe in an emergency situation. Courtney Arroyo, Access and Functional Needs Integration Liaison, informed families about the many resources the county



offers to help not only in natural disasters, but also in the day-to-day emergencies that come up when dealing with a child with special needs. Families learned what to expect when calling 911. Car seat

checks were also provided by the police department, and there was a resource fair where families had the chance to ask personal questions of the various emergency service departments. The resource fair included information about “Project Life-saver”, the Yellow Dot program, how to make a toddler emergency kit, and Child ID’s. “ITC was proud to host the Emergency Preparedness Event,” shared Family Support Liaison Benae Casino.



“It gave families an opportunity to learn important information, while also being a lot of fun! We are grateful to Courtney Arroyo and the Office of Emergency Management for all their hard work.”



How to Make a Gel Sensory Bag By: Ilse Rothenberg, Family Support Liaison

Open a Ziploc bag and lay it on a flat surface. Then pour hair gel into the bag.

Sprinkle glitter into the bag. Put any small trinkets into the bag. Be as creative as you’d like. There is no right or wrong way to do this.

Before sealing the bag, remove as much air as you can. Remember no air bubbles means more fun!

Seal the bag securely with tape.

Enjoy feeling, squishing, and talking about the items you’ve placed in the bag. There are endless possibilities -farm theme, under the sea, foam let-



ITC’s PURPOSE

The Infant & Toddler Connection of Fairfax-Falls Church provides early intervention supports and services to infants and toddlers from birth to age three who are not developing as expected or who have a medical condition that can delay normal development. Early intervention supports and services focus on increasing the child's participation in family and community activities that are important to the family. In addition, supports and services focus on helping parents and other caregivers know how to find ways to help the child learn during everyday activities. These supports and services are available for all eligible children and their families regardless of the family's ability to pay.

 To request this information in an alternate format, call ITC-FFC, 703-246-7180, 703-538-5292 (TTY). Fairfax County is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination in all county programs, services and activities and will provide reasonable accommodations upon request. To request special accommodations call ITC-FFC, 703-246-7180, 703-538-5292 (TTY). Please allow seven working days in advance of the event in order to make the necessary arrangements.

