**Wild Earth ECC and Preschool Parent Handbook**

**About Wild Earth Eco Childcare and Preschool**

The purpose of Wild Earth is to allow your child to learn and thrive in a natural space where environment acts as a teacher. The care is child-centered and nature-based, with philosophies being pulled from early childhood experts like Steiner, Montessori and Reggio. The curriculum is fluid/emergent and is balanced to meet the needs of the whole child; it attends to social, physical, cognitive, creative and emotional development.

I believe that the greatest tool for learning is experience; we all learn best through doing. It’s my duty to provide the environment that allows for positive educational and social experiences.

At Wild Earth ECC, your child will be immersed in natural play. Water and dirt—which subsequently create mud—will be a staple in his/her play. Children are encouraged to dig their hands into experiences, quite literally! Children will be out of doors EVERY day, so please send your child with weather-appropriate clothing.

The daily rhythm, though not rigid, will include movement, social interaction, story time, art, outdoor/indoor play and sometimes gardening and food-making, all of which will be developmentally appropriate.

Vegetarian, healthy snacks and lunches will be provided daily. If your child has any allergies, please provide this information on the General Enrollment Form. Similarly, if you exclude certain dietary items, please provide this information as well.

**Curriculum**

The curriculum I use is called A Child’s World and is a nature-based preschool and kindergarten curriculum designed by an experienced educator and reading therapist like myself. She holds two master’s degrees in related content, including curriculum writing! The following is taken from her curriculum description:

“This one-of-a-kind signature program is comprised of 20 cross-curricular nature-based themes designed to harness your preschooler's natural sense of wonder and curiosity for their world, give you an endless supply of activities to put together based on your child's interests, and encourage imaginative, playful interactions with nature to help your child develop a true love and appreciation for our Mother Earth.”

In addition to A Child’s Word, I incorporate Steiner and Reggio approaches, philosophies and methodologies. Transitions as well as mealtime are filled with verses that incorporate body movements; the children learn and adore these gentle ways of moving through the day!

**Daily Rhythm**

Below, is a sample of the daily rhythm. While routine is important, I am not a clock-watcher. I plan to follow the children's needs and interests but each day will have a similar flow so that the children grow to expect what is coming next.

8:30-8-45 arrivals and free-play
8:45 circle time (songs to welcome children and open up the day/stories)
9 outside play and activities
10:00 snack
10:30 art/guided gardening/baking
11:45 lunch
12:30 free play/pick-up/drop-off (1/2 day schedule)
1 circle time (songs to welcome/calm children/stories)
1:15 outside play/activities/art
1:45 quiet time/books/rest
3ish snack
3:30-4:30 outside/inside free-play/goodbyes
/ is equivalent to "and/or" depending upon the children's moods/needs at that time

**Examples of Art/Activities\***

Painting With Foods (mashed berries, beets) or Mud

Making Mud Pies

Foraging in the Yard

Veggie Printmaking

Designing/Decorating with Items Found Outside

Painting with Natural Objects (leaves, pinecones) or Fingers

Gardening

Making Forts and Teepees

Water Play

Bread Making

Sewing/Stitching (dull needle or/with string through felt or paper with pre-punched holes)

\*If you haven’t already noticed, our activities will be very messy. To ask the children to focus on cleanliness while experiencing these activities takes away from the experience itself. Please be OK with mess. It’s the Wild Earth way! ☺

**Sample Snack & Lunch Menu**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Monday** | **Tuesday** | **Wednesday** | **Thursday** | **Friday** |
| **Snack** | Raw Veggies /Hummus | Apples/Nut Butter | Gluten-free Pretzels | Organic O’s Cereal (plain or in seed/nut milk) | Fruit Platter (Bananas, Grapes, Strawberries and Cinnamon) |
| **Lunch** | Mashed Avocado/veggies and rice (rice day) | Crock Pot Veggie Soup (soup day) | Hot Grain Cereal with Granola and Fruit | Homemade Bread with Veggies (bread day) | Brown Rice or Oats and Avocado |

\*All food will be appropriate for child’s age and will be cut into safe, bite-sized bits.

\*Spices—such as sea salt, black pepper, garlic, cinnamon, turmeric and basil—will be used as ingredients in lunches. Using herbs and spices not only benefits health, it also introduces children to various flavors, which expands their taste palate!

**Policies and Procedures**

There will be times when I (or my child) fall ill or when appointments need to be made. I will do my best to ensure that all personal, health-related appointments are made outside of preschool hours but if that is not feasible, I will let you know as early as possible.

If something comes up where I need to be closed for an extended period of time (two or more consecutive days) I will let you know well in advance—a month or more ahead, if possible.

*Paid holiday closings*: New Years Eve and New Years Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Eve, Thanksgiving and the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

When the holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the acknowledged Federal/State holiday prevails; i.e. Christmas is on Sunday and the acknowledged Federal holiday is Monday December 26th.

*Vacation closing:* 10 paid vacation days per year. These days will be determined ahead of time and you will be given two months notice. I will do my best to work with the families and take vacation when you have off, as well. Typically, this will be in the fall and again around the winter holidays.

The purpose of taking vacation is to rest and to be with my family or just to catch up on home duties. I take my job very seriously and consider this to be a legitimate long-term career. In order to accomplish this, I need this time out to maintain the energy level it takes to give your child the quality care he/she deserves.

*I do reserve the right to close for any reason in which I cannot operate in a safe manner. i.e. loss of electricity, water, heat or in extreme circumstances, medical epidemics.*

**Redirection/Response to Inappropriate or Dangerous Behavior**

I offer gentle guidance and positive redirection when needed. Showing through example, giving useful other suggestions for behavior and talking through issues by acknowledging feelings are some examples of how I respond. I do not use “time outs” of any sort. If a child is behaving in a way that poses immediate risk to him/herself or others, I may remove the child from the situation and redirect their attention. Once calm, the issue will be addressed in a healthy way. If an issue cannot be resolved in my care—i.e. if frequent and deliberate harm to others is occurring—you will be notified ASAP. We will work together to help meet the communication needs of the child if an instance like this arises.

**Child’s Health**

With multiple children in my care, including my own, it is important that if illness occurs, other children are not put at risk. A group of sick children together could be a recipe for disaster and frankly, it’s not fair to the children. If your child exhibits any of the following symptoms, please keep him/her home or make alternate arrangements. I understand that taking time off is difficult, so if your child is in my care and shows signs of illness, I will use discretion.

Symptoms:

* Temperature – oral of 101 or higher, armpit of 100 or higher, accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness
* Signs of possible severe illness including unusual lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing, or other unusual signs until medical evaluation allows inclusion
* Diarrhea, until diarrhea stops
* Vomiting (2 or more episodes of vomiting in the previous 24 hours) until vomiting resolves and child is not at risk of dehydration
* Mouth sores with drooling, until medical evaluation determines condition is noninfectious
* Rash with fever or behavior change, until medical evaluation determines condition is not a communicable disease
* Pink eye (conjunctivitis)
* Scabies, head lice or other infestation, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated
* Tuberculosis, until medical evaluation determines child can attend preschool
* Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated
* Strep throat or other streptococcal infection, until 24 hours after cessation of fever
* Chicken pox, until 1 week after onset of rash or until all sores have dried and crusted
* Pertussis, until 5 days after appropriate treatment and a licensed physician states acceptable inclusion in writing
* Mumps, until 9 days after onset of gland swelling and a licensed physician states acceptable inclusion in writing
* Hepatitis A virus, until 1 week after onset of illness and a licensed physician states acceptable inclusion in writing
* Measles or Rubella, until 6 days after onset of rash and a licensed physician states acceptable inclusion in writing
* Unspecified respiratory illness if it limits the child’s comfortable participation in activities or if it results in a need for greater care than can be provided without compromising the health and safety of other children
* General illness that prevents your child from participating comfortably in the preschool environment or if it results in greater care need than I can provide without compromising the safety of the other children in my care

*Injuries:* I will supervise your child closely in an attempt to prevent injuries, but accidents resulting in injury do occur, especially with frequent outdoor and free play. I have been trained in first aid and CPR and will follow my training. If the injury is minor (requiring only a band-aid or ice) I will tell you about it when you pick up your child. If it is serious, I will call you and may even suggest that you take your child to the doctor or emergency room. If an injury is very severe, I will call 911 for assistance before I call you. If I cannot reach you, I will call the emergency contacts listed on your “General Enrollment Form”.

**Drop Off and Pick Up**

Please let me know if there is an emergency or something out of your control (traffic) that will cause you to pick your child up late. This can be done via text message. Pick up time—especially for those staying for the full day—is important, not only because children expect a parent or guardian to arrive at that time but also because that is my “quit” time each day. Working at home requires me to have those boundaries.

**Becoming Toilet Independent**

I do not rush or force toilet practice. I listen and read the cues of the child and openly communicate with them regarding using the toilet. Similarly, I guide them to communicate their toilet needs in a way that works for them. If your child still working on independence in this area, please be sure to provide the necessary items during this time (extra clothing, diapers or pull-ups if needed).

**Supplies**

Your child does not need to bring food or cups/utensils. If your child requires additional items, please speak to me in advance. I have some extra clothes for emergencies. I have homemade skin-healing salve to use if necessary but if you prefer your own, please supply that, too.

I’ll ask that at the onset of care, you bring the following additional items that I may store here. As time goes on and items are used, I will send them home to be replaced.

Additional clothes: 1 tee shirt, 1 long sleeved shirt, two pairs of bottoms that cover the knees, 3 pairs of underwear (if potty independent or working on it), 2 pairs of socks.

Please also note the weather each day. If there will be rain or snow, send your child with appropriate outdoor wear. We WILL go outside, rain, snow, or shine! Close-toed, easy-on shoes are required! Also, we follow the Steiner color-of-the-day to help children internalize the very abstract concept of time! Monday=purple; Tuesday=red; Wednesday=yellow; Thursday=orange; Friday=green

In lieu of sunscreen, please ensure your child wears thin, breathable long sleeved shirts and pants as well as a sun hat.

**Payment Guidelines**

Wild Earth ECC is my main source of employment. Your payments help to keep the preschool running as well as support my child and me. I ask that payments be made in cash, check or through PayPal (on my website [www.WildEarthECC.weebly.com/make-payment.html](http://www.WildEarthECC.weebly.com/make-payment.html)) by selecting the appropriate package on or before the 15th of every month. If you are beginning care AFTER the 15th, I ask that you secure your spot by paying on the 15th prior to the start of care.

Registration fee ($25) is also due prior to the start of care and this payment can also be made by selecting the “Registration” option at the above address.

If we have independently come to a different payment arrangement or agreement, please use the “Donate” button on the site to pay the specifically agreed upon amount. All payments are due on or before the 15th.

If you need weekend (Friday evening, Saturday or Sunday) care, the charge is $10/hour. This payment can also be made in cash, check or through the PayPal “Donate” button.

If, for any reason, a cost increase is required, I will give you two weeks notice. Please note that PayPal charges a fee for the payment feature and the fee is reflected (added to) the online payment options.

**Termination**

If care needs to be ended, please give two weeks written notice and two weeks full payment to cease enrollment.

**Trial Period**

There is a trial period of 4 weeks from the date preschool begins. If the arrangements are not mutually satisfactory, either party can terminate this agreement with one day’s notice. Any payments already made are non-refundable.

**Final Thoughts**

In my care, your child will become a part of my family. One of the perks of having such a small group is the bond we will create. Additionally, your child will get significant one-on-one attention and love.

Communication with me is an open door. Please feel free to discuss any concerns or thoughts that come up while your child is in my care. Within reason, I am able to honor most of your requests due to the small amount of children. Please also trust that I will openly communicate with you and I will respect your wishes. Your child will be treated as my own. As a mother, I understand and recognize the fears and concerns that come with leaving your child in another’s care.

A big part of why I chose to create Wild Earth ECC is to provide care for children in the ways that I want my child cared for.

Thank you for entrusting me with your child’s care! I am excited to begin this journey with your little one. ☺

Signature of Parent/Guardian:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_