



# SBCCSI Newsletter

## What? No Letter of the Week?

How SBCCSI Supports Your Child's Literacy Skills  
By Lee Ann Heller

With the current push in education today for students to excel on testing, there is often a perception that our children are behind unless they are systematically learning through direct instruction. This is often seen at the preschool level in the form of "letter of the week" activities and handouts that involve tracing and coloring a showcased letter. As a parent at Stony Brook Child Care, you may have noticed that these strategies are not used in our classrooms and you may be concerned that your child is "falling behind"; or you may be worried that the curriculum at SBCCSI does not promote your child's emerging literacy skills.

As both a parent and reading teacher, I would like to share with all parents why the strategies used at SBCCSI are based on "best practices" in Early Childhood education. Mem Fox, a leading voice in early childhood literacy, discusses in her book *Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children will Change Their Lives Forever*, that the key to supporting emerging literacy in young children is to immerse them in a reading-rich environment where "talking" about books plays a central role in your child's life. In your child's classroom, knowledge of individual letters, often referred to as phonics, is important and reinforced throughout the day; but the real "meat" of reading occurs every time your child's teacher reads aloud to your child and more importantly "talks" to your child about what is going on in the book.

According to Mem Fox, "Children need to hear a thousand stories read aloud before they begin to learn to read for themselves...That sounds daunting. But three stories a day will deliver us a thousand stories in one year alone." The literature-rich environment at SBCCSI more than puts your child on the right track for learning to read. You, too, can reinforce your child's literacy skills at home by reading aloud and talking through a book with your child. To help your child reach their goal of a thousand stories, Mem Fox suggests reading three stories a day: one favorite, one familiar, and one new. As you read to your child, take comfort in knowing that your child is developing a love for literature at SBCCSI that will give them an excellent foundation in reading as they move into elementary school and beyond.

## SBCCSI Versus the Vintage Rolls Royce By Marci Lobel

This afternoon I scanned some vintage car Web sites. A 1952 Silver Wraith Rolls Royce was selling for a cool \$95,000. Why, you may wonder, was I wasting time looking at cars that I certainly can't - and never will - afford? Because I wanted a tangible standard of comparison. You see, after writing my very last tuition check to SBCCSI recently (our youngest child begins kindergarten in September), I calculated the amount of tuition that my husband and I have paid over the 11 years that we've had children enrolled here. The total? Let's just say it was more than the cost of the Rolls Royce.

So that got me thinking... Why would anyone in their right mind spend that much money to send their children to SBCCSI? Especially when there might be less expensive options? Why pay for a Rolls Royce when you can buy a nice Honda instead? (Disclosure: I drive an 11-year-old Accord, the third Honda I have owned. I like Hondas.)



### Teachers' Favorite Books for Preschoolers and Toddlers

*Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*, *Knuffle Bunny* by Mo Willems

*Horton Hears a Who*, *The Sneetches*, *The Many Colored Days* by Dr. Seuss

*The Magic Hat*, *Tough Boris* by Mem Fox

*Moira's Birthday* by Robert Munsch

*Priscilla and the Pink Planet* by Nathaniel Hobbie

*Sheep in a Jeep* by Nancy Shaw

*Click, Clack, Moo, Cows That Type* by Doreen Cronin and Betsy Lewin

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle

As any working parent would agree, it's impossible to put a price on the security of knowing that one's child is well cared for, safe, and happy while we toil away at our jobs. On the very first day that my oldest child began at SBCCSI and I returned to work, a colleague cautiously asked me, "How are you doing?" thinking that I was probably feeling nervous and maybe guilty about having my infant son in child care. I turned to my colleague, raised my hands to the sky, and loudly responded, "Hallelujah!" That's because SBCCSI saved me. It gave me the privilege to return to my life as a working adult during part of the day. I have never worried about my children when they were at SBCCSI. I knew not only that they were being well cared for, but that they were being **TREASURED**. And because I had that time away from them to "be an adult," when I was reunited with my children each afternoon, I was happier, able to be more fully focused on their needs and pleasures. This was one way that having my children at SBCCSI helped me be a better parent.

Continued on page 4

*The Deep Blue Sea: A Book of Colors* by Audrey and Bruce Wood

*On The Day You Were Born* by Debra Frasier

*The Crayon Box That Talked* by Shane DeRolf

*The Land of Many Colors* by Klamath County YMCA Family Preschool (available through Scholastic)

*The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* by Eugene Trivizas and Helen Oxenbury

*The Snowy Day* by Ezra Keats

*Ira Sleeps Over* by Bernard Waber

*Caps for Sale* by Esphyr Slobadkina

## **SBCCSI Teacher Invited to Russia**

**By Conky Nostrand**



My name is Constance Nostrand, but in the world of child care I'm known as Conky. I was recently selected to go to Russia and participate in the U.S. – Russia Joint Education Conference as an early childhood specialist, and will be one of 16 American delegates. This is not only a great honor but a terrific opportunity to promote Stony Brook Child Care on an international level. The individualized working sessions will focus specifically on exploring the Russian education system. The delegation will also explore curriculum and instruction; literacy, science, and math; preventing family violence; family involvement; and assessment.

The conference will be mostly round table discussions with our Russian colleagues, and the participants will visit a Russian preschool as well as a teachers college. The three topics I chose to discuss are the value of free play, conflict resolution and problem solving, and storytelling.

The conference will take place in St. Petersburg and after the conference there is an extended adventure in Moscow. So now I must go and brush up on my Russian, *dosveydanya*.

## **Nutrition Corner**

**By Nancy Walker**



With all that's known about healthful eating for children, public schools are beginning to institute nutrition policies. SBCCSI has had such a policy for five years. Created by a group of parents, staff, and board members under the guidance of registered dietitian and former SBCCSI parent, Josephine Connolly-Schoonen, it's based on the latest nutritional information.

The policy sets out guidelines and groups food into categories according to their nutrient density. Nutrient density refers to the amounts of nutrients a food provides relative to the number of calories it provides. Nutrient-dense foods provide many nutrients for the calories they offer, they give a bigger "bang" for the calorie buck. Low-nutrient-dense foods are popularly known as empty calories; they provide calories without many nutrients.

Parents are also asked to be conscious of commercial packaging of food products; plain, non-commercial packaging is strongly recommended.

The goal of this policy is to create a healthy eating environment in which children can explore their food preferences.

TREASURED. That's a word that Rolls Royce owners might use, but we rarely use it in conjunction with child care. Yet I learned rather quickly that the teachers at SBCCSI treasure our children. Who else other than a parent gets as excited when our children draw a colorful picture or sing "Sneaky Mister Alligator" or learn to wash their own hands (okay, other than Grandma)? Almost anyone can change a diaper or feed a child, but few child care providers respect, love, and understand children as well as the teachers at SBCCSI. Our Center is recognized nationally as a model of child care – a place where teachers are exceptionally knowledgeable about child development, health, learning, language, and other relevant topics; a place that fosters community between families and child care providers; a place where teachers help children (and adults) learn to speak for themselves, learn how to get along with a wide variety of people, learn about language, letters, numbers, colors, science, and art in ways that are developmentally appropriate and which excite and engage them. Children at SBCCSI thrive intellectually (the academic accomplishments of now-grown SBCCSI graduates is incredible!), but perhaps more importantly, because of the way they are treasured in this special environment, our children thrive socially and emotionally. A large body of evidence from the field of psychology (my field) shows that social and emotional intelligence are better predictors of lifelong success than other forms of intelligence. It's impossible to list all of the ways in which SBCCSI teachers treasure our children. But you can see it in their face when they joyously welcome a child in the morning, when they share an amusing observation about a child at pick-up time, or even when they carefully explain why an item

we sent in our child's lunchbox isn't healthy for them. Dear, wonderful, hard-working, devoted, generous SBCCSI teachers, my husband and I are enormously grateful for your role in our lives. You have helped mold our children, and by serving as a model for us to emulate ("I need you to listen to me now," "Are you using your body in a safe way?"), I think we have become better parents. Our entire family has learned how to communicate better. It always makes me chuckle to hear my 85-year-old parents telling each other to "Use your words!"

So there it is. I could write more about why SBCCSI is worth as much as a Rolls Royce. But I imagine that further convincing won't be necessary if each of you reading this does just one little thing: Glance over at your child right now. How precious is your child? What does she or he deserve? The Rolls Royce of child care or a Honda?

To be perfectly honest, I won't miss writing those tuition checks. After all, I'm not crazy (nor independently wealthy). But I leave SBCCSI with no regrets whatsoever for spending the amount of a Rolls Royce, and I'm absolutely sure that I bought something MUCH more valuable than a vintage car. Your children and my children are worth every dollar that we spend on their child care. Besides, have you ever had a Rolls Royce put its little arms around your neck or plant a sweet kiss on your cheek?

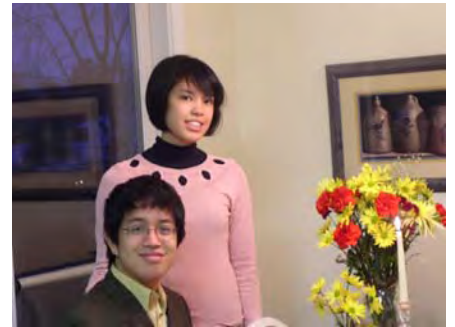
SBCCSI, you ARE the Rolls Royce of child care. Our family thanks you, we will miss you, and we will forever love you.

# Where Are They Now?

## Updates from SBCCSI Friends and Alumni

One of the joys of working with young children is that they and their families form a strong connection to the teachers and the center. Often they keep in touch for years after they leave. I had the pleasure of teaching Jessica and Gabriel Quaison, the brother and sister featured here. They were enrolled at ECC, the Early Childhood Center of SBCCSI when we were located on Daniel Webster Drive. I am proud of their accomplishments, and so delighted that they recall their experiences with such pleasure and put into words how those earliest experiences influenced their lives.

Denise Masone



**Jessica Quaison**, a junior at Ward Melville High School received an award from the Three Village School Administrators Association for “outstanding achievement and caring and cheerful nature” upon completion of the 6th grade, and in the 9th grade became a member of the National Junior Honor Society for community service and academic achievement. She sings with the church music ministry at St. James Church and is active with a literary magazine and civil rights activist group. Her GPA is among the top 10 percent of her class, and she will be searching for a college in the coming months. **Jessica volunteered at SBCCSI in an infant toddler room during the summer of 2006.**

*“For me, ECC is a place I will always think of as a place for friends. I always enjoyed playing house, swinging on the swings, and just being around other kids my age. Little did I know, this created a sense of community for me when I grew older. The kids I played with when I was small I reconnected with in summer camp and school several years later. Also, I cannot remember ever feeling bored while at ECC. The teachers always had activities for us to do, from making baking soda volcanoes in the sand box, to dancing to the radio, to even sledding in the wintertime.”*



**Gabriel Quaison** is a sophomore at SUNY Binghamton pursuing a double major in Economics and Sociology, and turning 20 this month. *“If there is anything I can remember from my days at ECC, it is how my sense of wonderment was indulged. From playing with old shampoo bottles, to digging up snails in the front yard, or discovering different ways to shape shaving cream dispensed in a tub, every activity was stimulating. In my collegiate years, my juvenile imagination has translated into a sociological one, with a self-asserted regard to economics, as I pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree in each discipline. I am considering entering the field of policy (public or private) one day as a means of improving the lives of the parents of children that may very well be attending a day care like ECC, developing their minds the same way I have.”*



## September 28

### “A Tasty Way To Raise Dough” Pizza Fundraiser

Uno’s Chicago Grill of Nesconset (Rt 25, across from the mall and next to Costco) is sponsoring a fundraiser for SBCCSI. Present a coupon—available at the Center and SBCCSI will receive 20 percent of all purchases from 12 noon to 11:00 pm.

### Veteran’s Home Visitors

Over the past few months, we have enjoyed four visits from our Grandfriends at the Veteran’s Home who worked alongside our preschoolers on art and music activities. Visits for the fall are being scheduled now.

#### Stony Brook Child Care Services Inc.

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[www.sunysb.edu/childcare](http://www.sunysb.edu/childcare)



## Thanks!

**Roanoke Sand and Gravel Corp.** of Middle Island, donated 15 cubic yards (!) of sand for our play yards in July. Thank you, Jim Barker and the Barker family.



Many of our **SBCCSI parents** have generously given to the Center in many ways: time spent on committee and fundraising work; money for educational materials, and to create much-needed storage space; and new trees and bushes for our play yards.

