

## Provider Spotlights

**Lauderdale County** is excited to spotlight Mrs. Felichia Reeder. Mrs. Reeder has been married for 11 years and has



4 children, 1 grandchild and is expecting her second grandchild before the end of the year. She has been a relative care provider in the Kids and Kin Program for seven months. Felichia's hobbies include making crafts and treats for the little ones in her family, but her greatest joy comes from caring for her tiny heartbeats. Besides the training on social media safety and challenging behaviors, she has appreciated most

the annual CPR/First Aid class. She recommends that everyone join the Kids and Kin Program to stay up-to-date on keeping children safe, and also keeping a positive relationship with the children in your life. Felichia also enjoys the support given by the other providers. Thank you, Mrs. Reeder, it is providers like you who make this program so fulfilling.

**Talladega County** is honored to spotlight Mrs. Patricia Smith. Mrs. Smith is a loving wife, mother and grandmother who has been involved with the Kids and Kin Program since November 2019. Ms. Patti first became acquainted with Kids and Kin when she was visiting the Munford Public Library with her 2 young grandchildren, and has continued to be an active participant for over 3 years. She was new to Kids and Kin during the COVID years and remained loyal to



our program even when we had to

meet in large open areas hidden behind face masks. Patti recently completed her second year in the Fall Incentive Program. She loves spending time with her family, especially her grandchildren and enjoys gardening and baking. As the devoted, passionate, matriarch of her family, Mrs. Smith is always lending a helping hand, sharing her pearls of wisdom and offering her loving support and encouragement. Our program is truly thankful for you, Mrs. Smith.

**Wilcox County** is delighted to spotlight Mrs. Doris Smith.

Mrs. Smith has been a relative care provider in the Kids and Kin Program for several years. She loves the informative and relevant information gained through the training classes, and her support of the program shows by her fantastic recruiting skills. Mrs. Doris is a jewel in the Pine Apple community, always willing to give a helping hand to everyone. Thank you, Mrs. Smith for the warmth and kindness that always radiates from you. We are so excited to have you as a part of the Kids and Kin Program.



**Etowah County** is privileged to spotlight Ms. Brenda Scott. Brenda is a retired college admission clerk, and the mother of five. She is a grandmother of four, 3 granddaughters and 1 grandson, and great grand to 4 active boys. She is a natural born nurturer, and cares for not only her grandchildren, but also the children of other family members and friends. With the children in her care there is never a dull moment, and they bring to her life so much laughter and joy. Brenda loves to bake, craft, and decorate. Her hobbies include taking nature walks and traveling. Ms. Scott says, "Since attending the Kids and Kin Program, I have learned a great deal about interacting with this new generation of children. I have learned why kids think and act the way that they do, and I love that I get to share this knowledge with all my kids, both young and old." Brenda loves that the training topics are so informative. She also loves the fact that all the providers are given the chance to share their experiences. Thank you, Ms. Scott, it is providers like yourself that makes this program so worthwhile.





## Gearing Up For Kindergarten

Kindergarten brings big changes for children. For some, it's their first time in a structured school setting. For others, it's going from a small classroom in preschool to a big room with lots of kids. Children all respond differently, too. Some are excited by new experiences and can't wait. Some have a tough time with change and are nervous. And children may react differently once they walk in the classroom door. Children also come to kindergarten with different levels of readiness. Some already have the skills they need, like knowing the alphabet and counting to 10. Some haven't gotten there yet. Here are some ways to make the transition easier.

**Practice kindergarten skills:** Over the summer, practice activities children will be doing in class, like forming letters and holding a pencil. It's fine if children have not mastered these skills when school starts. But it can ease stress for them and help the teacher if the kindergarten classroom isn't the first place the children try these tasks. Kindergartners also cut out lots of shapes. If a child hasn't used kid-friendly scissors yet, now's a good time to try them out.

**Set clear bedtime and morning routines:** There's a good chance children will have new morning routines with the start of kindergarten. Maybe it's an earlier wake-up time, or having to be outside and ready for the school bus. Depending on your morning schedule, it may help to move bedtime to an earlier time. Before school starts, run through the morning routine them, too. Practice having children wake up on time, get dressed, and eat breakfast. Will you be the one getting your child out the door? If not, have the caregiver who will be handling mornings with your child try out the routine a couple of times.

**Start phasing out nap time:** Many kindergarten classes have rest time. But if a child still takes naps, this break will probably be shorter than the naps he is used to. Start cutting the length of nap time by a couple of minutes a day before school starts. (A shorter nap might help with the change to an earlier bedtime, also).

**Make following directions fun:** Children in kindergarten are expected to follow directions throughout the school day. Practice this at home in fun ways. Have children do activities with one and two-step directions before school starts. You can do crafts or play new games together. Or you could have children help when you're cooking.

**Practice asking for help:** Children may be nervous about needing help at school. That might be with personal things like going to the bathroom independently or getting ready to leave at the end of the day. Explain that the teacher is always there to help if there's a problem and that it's okay to ask. Have children practice asking for help before the school year starts. This helps them build confidence to speak up for what they need when they need it.

**Remind children of their strengths:** Some children worry about not being "good enough" at doing things. Explain that kindergarten is all about trying new things and working to get better at old things. Talk about activities they have done and learned in the past. Point out past successes, whether it was learning to tie shoes or catching a ball. The transition to kindergarten can take a little while, and there may be ups and downs. But a little preparation can make a big difference in how children feel about starting school.



### 4th of July Marshmallow Launcher!

**Materials Needed:** Toilet paper roll, Red and white striped paper or red and white paint, Blue balloon, Rubber band, Mini Marshmallows

**Directions:**

Cut the striped paper to fit around the toilet paper roll and glue into place; or paint red and white stripes onto the roll.

Tie a knot in the bottom of an uninflated balloon.

Cut the top (round part) off the balloon.

Wrap the open end of the balloon around the bottom of the toilet paper roll and secure with a rubber band.

To use, place a marshmallow into the launcher and pull the knotted end back. Let go of the balloon to launch the marshmallow.

## Backpack Safety, It's Time To Lighten The Load



When you move a child's backpack after he or she drops it at the door, does it feel like it contains 40 pounds of rocks? Maybe you've noticed the child struggling to put it on, bending forward while carrying it, or complaining of tingling or numbness. If you've been concerned about the effects that extra weight might have on a child's still-growing body, your instincts are correct. Backpacks that are too heavy can cause a lot of problems for kids, like back, neck and shoulder pain, as well as poor posture. While it's common these days to see children carrying as much as a quarter of their body weight, the American Chiropractic Association (ACA) recommends

a backpack weigh no more than 5% to 10% of a child's weight. While we wait for solutions like digital textbooks to become widespread, there are things you can do to help prevent injury.

**Start with an Ergonomic (designed to be comfortable) Backpack:** When selecting a backpack, look for:

- ◆ An appropriate size: A backpack should not be wider than a child's torso or hang more than 4 inches below the waist.
- ◆ Padded, adjustable shoulder straps to help distribute the weight on the child's back without digging into their shoulders
- ◆ Padded back to protect against contents inside the backpack poking into the child's back
- ◆ Waist and chest straps to help distribute the weight of the backpack more evenly across the child's back
- ◆ Multiple compartments to help position the weight more effectively
- ◆ Compression straps to stabilize the contents
- ◆ Reflective material to allow children to be seen when walking to and from school

**Use the Backpack Correctly:** Check the fit of the backpack:

- ◆ Make sure children use both straps when carrying the backpack; using one strap shifts the weight to one side and causes muscle pain and posture problems
- ◆ Make certain the shoulder straps are tightened so the backpack is fitted to the child's back; a dangling backpack can cause spinal misalignment and pain
- ◆ Encourage children to use the chest, waist and compression straps, and to adjust them to the load

**Pack Smartly:** A roomy backpack may seem like a good idea, but the more space there is to fill, the more likely a child will fill it:

- ◆ Help children determine what is absolutely necessary to carry. If it's not essential, have them leave it at home, in their locker or in the classroom
- ◆ Teach children to load the backpack with the heaviest items first closest to the bottom and the center of the back of the backpack and to make use of the multiple compartments to distribute the load

**What about Backpacks on Wheels?** According to the ACA, rolling backpacks should be used "cautiously and on a limited basis by only those students who are not physically able to carry a backpack." The reason? They clutter classrooms, replacing a potential back injury hazard with a tripping hazard. So, pick up that backpack from time to time, and let children know you've got their backs.

## What is Labor Day?

Labor Day is a federal holiday in the United States of America. It's celebrated every year on the first Monday in September. The purpose of Labor Day is to celebrate the laborers who worked to build the U.S. into what it is today. It also recognizes the importance of the labor movement in society.

One way children can show appreciation for the hard working people around their neighborhood is have them make thank you cards. They could give them to the mailman, cashier, the trash collector, fireman or any other helpful worker they come into regular contact with.







Family Guidance Center of Alabama  
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## Transitioning Children's Schedules from Summer Mode to School Mode

**Start early and go slow:** School is probably the last thing you want to think about in July, but going from summer mode to school mode takes time. Begin the transition process a few weeks before school starts, taking care to make changes little by little to avoid a shock to the system.

**The first step to transitioning from summer to school is talk about it:** Casually bring it up, talk about what they're looking forward to, which friends they're excited to see, what they're worried about and how to potentially deal with what they're worried about.

**Restart routines:** To avoid the back-to-school morning chaos, about one to two weeks before school begins, move bedtime up by five to ten minutes each night, which naturally makes morning wake-ups happen earlier. Once the first day arrives, everyone's feeling ready and not groggy. Have a consistent bedtime routine, where kids do the exact same thing every night before bed. For instance: bath, then teeth-brushing, then book, then lights out. The brain starts to connect this routine with sleep, so when you go through the steps, it sends out chemicals that help kids fall asleep faster and more reliably. Aim to serve meals at approximately the same times the child will be eating throughout the school year.

**Reducing screen time:** Chances are your child has spent quite a bit of time on their phones tablets, computers, or watching TV this summer. When school starts and they have to put down the technology and open up a book, it can be challenging for them. Weaning children off of their devices can make the transition easier. One of the ways to do this is by putting a limit on the amount of time they can spend per day on their phones, tablets, or video game systems.

Summer ending can be a sad time for parents, caregivers and students, but it is also a time to reflect on all of the growth and progress already made and all that is yet to come. Good luck to all parents, caregivers, and students as the new school year approaches!