

## Provider Spotlights

**Mobile County spotlights** Diana Ankney. Diana currently serves as both the director and special events coordinator of the Grand Bay Community Center. Diana is always working for the betterment of her community. She serves on the organizing committee for the Grand Bay Christmas festivities and as Cub Master for Boy Scouts of America Pack



18. When initially approached about the Kids and Kin Program meeting at the Grand Bay Community Center, with no hesitation her answer was yes. She enrolled and is currently a candidate for the Voluntary Certification Program. Diana often states “how informative and relevant” our classes are each session. Diana, thanks for accommodating our program and thanks for being a participant in the Kids and Kin Program.

**Lauderdale County spotlights** Shirley Ross, who attended our first Lauderdale County Kids and Kin class on May 23, 2016 and continues to attend meetings faithfully. She cares for three nieces and one nephew. She taught at Handy Head Start for almost twenty-five years and feels that Kids and Kin classes are a wonderful resource



for Head Start and substitute teachers. Ms. Ross enjoys learning from our variety of workshops, sharing stories about her students, and learning from other providers. She also shares the information she learns with her sister. Her favorite

classes have been “Knowing the Milestones, Spotting Delays” and “Pulleys, Levers, and Wheels, Oh My!” She believes Kids and Kin workshops are important because providers learn new activities to do with the children. Thank you, Ms. Ross, for sharing your years of experience with us.

**Clay County spotlights** Tina Nolen, Director of Ashland City Library. Ms. Nolan is a charter member of the Clay County Kids and Kin program. Tina is a loving grandmother of two grandsons, a 3-year-old and a 5-month-old. Tina delights in being a grand mom who enjoys reading to her little grandsons and watching them grow and explore their world. She lights up in our Kids and Kin groups when she shares stories about her “little grands” and her new insights as a grandparent! Tina has been a Clay County resident all of her life and has a very strong passion and commitment for her community and the patrons of the library. She is a community leader who embraces a progressive vision for Clay County and the city of Ashland. Tina’s big hearted enthusiasm and passion for her community is contagious! Tina Nolen has a special gift for bringing people together and promoting positive change in Ashland and Clay County. She is a major advocate helping expand resources and services for the residents of Clay County and the Kids and Kin Program.

**Escambia County spotlights** retired educator, Ms. Doris Cristina Crewell, an avid reader with a true affinity for books and African American history. Ms. Crewell, who prefers to be called Cris, believes she gained her love for books from her father who was also an avid reader. Cris now shares her love of reading with her grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Her favorite author is Langston Hughes. One of her favorite poems by Langston Hughes is “I Too.” Now that she is retired, Ms. Crewell volunteers at the Brewton Library where she assists weekly with the adult reading program. Cris completed the Kids and Kin Voluntary Certification Program eight years ago, and is now a repeat member of our Fall Incentive Program. She loves the Kids and Kin Program for the materials and information she receives and the fellowship with the participants. We are grateful and appreciative of the wisdom and knowledge that she shares with the group.



## The Benefits of



## Play for Adults

In our hectic modern lives, many of us focus so heavily on work, family commitments, and caring for others that we never seem to have time for pure fun. Somewhere between childhood and adulthood, we stop playing. When we do carve out some leisure time, we're more likely to zone out in front of the TV or computer than engage in fun, rejuvenating play like we did as children. But just because we're adults, that doesn't mean we have to take ourselves so seriously and make life all about work. We all need to play.

Play is not just essential for kids; it can be an important source of relaxation and stimulation for adults as well. Playing with children, friends, and pets, is a sure and fun way to fuel your imagination, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and emotional well-being. Play can:

**Relieve stress.** Play is fun and can trigger the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain.

**Improve brain function.** Playing chess, completing puzzles, or pursuing other fun activities that challenge the brain can help prevent memory problems and improve brain function. The social interaction of playing with family and friends can also help ward off stress and depression.

**Stimulate the mind and boost creativity.** Young children often learn best when they are playing, and that principle applies to adults, as well. You'll learn a new task better when it's fun and you're in a relaxed and playful mood. Play can also stimulate your imagination, helping you adapt and problem solve.

**Improve relationships and your connection to others.** Sharing laughter and fun can foster empathy, compassion, trust, and intimacy with others. Play doesn't have to be a specific activity; it can also be a state of mind. Developing a playful nature can help you loosen up in stressful situations, break the ice with strangers, make new friends, and form new relationships.

**Keep you feeling young and energetic.** In the words of George Bernard Shaw, "We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing." Playing can boost your energy and vitality and even improve your resistance to disease, helping you feel your best.

Incorporating more fun and play into your daily life can improve the quality of your relationships, as well as your mood and outlook. Even in the most difficult of times, taking time away from your troubles to play or laugh can go a long way toward making you feel better. It's true what they say, laughter really is the best medicine.

## Children and Play

Rolling on the floor with a baby or getting down on your knees to play with a young child is important, both to the child's development and to your own health. Play is essential for developing social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills in children. In fact, far from being a waste of time or just a fun distraction, play is a time when children are often learning the most. Whether it's an infant playing peek-a-boo, a toddler playing make-believe, or an older child playing a board game, play develops social skills, stimulates a child's imagination and makes kids better adjusted, smarter, and less stressed. While children need time to play alone and with other children, playing with parents and caregivers is also important. Here are some helpful tips to encourage play:



**Establish regular play times.** It may be for twenty minutes after school, before dinner every night or every Saturday morning, for example. Remember, this time spent playing together is benefiting both of you.

**Give children your undivided attention.** Turn off the TV and your cell phone and make the time to play with children without distraction. Having your undivided attention makes them feel special.

**Get down to the child's level.** That may mean getting down on your knees or sitting on the floor. Match the child's intensity during play. If the child is loud and energetic, be loud and energetic, too!

**Embrace repetition.** It may be boring to you, but it's not to the child. Children learn through repetition. Let children play the same game over and over. The child will move on when he or she is ready.

**Let the children take the lead.** Become part of their game rather than trying to dictate the play. In pretend play, let the child call the shots, make the rules, and determine the pace of play. Ask questions and follow along, you'll likely get drawn into imaginative new worlds that are fun for you, too.

**Don't force play or try to prolong a game.** The best way to teach a new skill is to show children how something works, then step back and give them a chance to try. When the child is tired of an activity, it's time to move on to something new.

**Make play age-appropriate and consider safety.** If a game is too hard or too easy, it loses its sense of pleasure and fun. Help children find age-appropriate activities and understand safety rules for play. Nothing ruins a fun game faster than a child getting hurt.

Keep in mind that, as well as aiding a child's development, play can also bring adults and children closer together, strengthening bonds that can last a lifetime.

## Pudding Planter Boxes



Pudding planter box cookies are the perfect spring time treat. The possibilities of what you can plant in your pudding planter box is endless! The picture and directions show you how to plant carrots, but use your imagination! Happy planting!

**Items Needed:** chocolate pudding; chocolate cookies, crushed; graham crackers; green gel frosting; orange Mike & Ike candy; chocolate chips, melted

**Directions:** Take one sheet of graham crackers and break into 4 pieces. Using a sharp knife, cut one of the pieces into two pieces for the end of the planter box. Using melted chocolate in a piping bag or zip lock bag with a small corner cut off, pipe a bit of chocolate onto the outside edges of the top of one cookie (this will be the bottom of the box). Press each of the side pieces to the base and hold for 5-10 seconds to allow it to set. Repeat this process for the two end pieces of graham crackers. Refrigerate for 10-15 minutes to allow chocolate to set completely. Fill each box with chocolate pudding, leaving  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch gap from the top. Cover pudding with crushed chocolate cookies. Place 3 pieces of orange Mike & Ike candies into pudding, narrow end down. Dab the tops of orange candy with green gel icing. Refrigerate for 10 minutes before serving.



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## Sun Safety

When kids are outdoors, it's important to protect their skin to prevent melanoma and skin damage from too much sun exposure. Here's how to help kids enjoy fun in the sun safely.

- 1. Teach the shadow rule:** Kids love playing with their shadows. A simple way to make them more aware of the sun's position is to teach them the rule, "short shadow? Seek shade." When their shadow is shorter than their height, the sun's UV rays are more likely to cause a sunburn.
- 2. Wear sunglasses:** The Skin Cancer Foundation recommends that kids over the age of 6 months wear sunglasses because kids under the age of 10 are at high risk for ocular changes resulting from UV ray damage. Not to mention their eyelids and skin around their eyes are more vulnerable to the sun than adult skin. *Tip: Kids are more likely to wear shades if they select the style themselves.*
- 3. Note peak sun hours:** The sun's UV rays are at their strongest between the hours of 10:00am and 4:00pm. Get kids in the habit of noting the time of day before they head outside to play. Pretty soon, they'll reach for protective sun gear without you telling them.
- 4. Wet and sweat = More sunscreen:** Even waterproof sunscreen needs to be reapplied after sports and swimming. Get kids in the habit of applying more sunscreen when they're finished with activities that cause them to get wet or sweat.
- 5. Cover up:** One of the best ways to protect skin is to cover up. To make sure clothes offer enough protection, put your hand inside garments. If you see your hand you need more protection.
- 6. Adults need to serve as role models:** A child isn't going to want to put on a hat outside if you don't. Kids are more likely to embrace sun safety if adults do too. It's up to us to walk the talk.
- 7. Make sunscreen a year-round habit:** Adding one more thing into the morning routine is tough, but this one is a must-do. When kids are old enough, have them apply sunscreen after brushing their teeth in the morning, or figure out a way to make it easy for them to integrate it into their routine. Until then, adults need to do it, and likely multiple times per day to build this habit of a lifetime.