

The Open Door Witness

November 2020

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From the Director

Open Door Preschool's 2019-20 school year ended abruptly on March 17th as we shut down due to the corona virus pandemic that was sweeping through North Dakota and the United States at an alarming pace. There was no end-of-year program/graduation.



No good-byes. No summer program. All the alphabet, language, numbers, and drawing booklets that the children had produced were gathered into their cubbies for parents to pick up as they were able.

Initially we thought closure would last for a short time, perhaps a few weeks. But lack of information about the virus in general, unknown extent to which various age populations might be affected differently, and need for guidance from state agencies as to appropriate measures ultimately resulted in a five month shut down that ended August 17. We worked through the summer on our plan to make changes that would allow reopening. By August 3, our plan was approved by Burleigh County Social Services, Child Care Aware, (*continued on p.5*)

What is the mission of the Open Door?



When it comes to the mission of any organization, the point of view needs to come from the various stakeholders. At Open Door, the same is true. We have children ages four and five who attend our preschool. We have their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles who want a safe and nurturing environment for their loved ones. We have our church families who provide gifts that help us maintain an affordable preschool.

So when you put all of these stakeholders together, what do they want the Open Door Community Center to be? My answer is "a superior, Christ-centered preschool that prepares students for life's opportunities by instilling a spirit-filled foundation."

Children come to the preschool from all walks of life. They are greeted by friendly staff members who always have their best interests at heart. I always love to hear when a brother or sister of a child

who has already attended Open Door continues their family legacy at our preschool. That tells me that the parents feel that they are getting value for their investment.

As board members, we hear about the various programs underway to help students discover their talents, overcome obstacles and develop habits that will stay with them for a lifetime. One of those habits is as simple as reading. We learn to read so that we can read to learn.

Some children learn their first prayers at Open Door. Others have questions about Jesus and his disciples. Still others learn songs that help them remember that Jesus is their friend and savior.

These are just some of the things that set Open Door apart. But it doesn't just happen by magic. The staff is trained and led by Jolene who continues to provide resources to help the children. When we were on break from April to August, Jolene continued to keep working to ensure that everything was ready to start up again.

This has been a year of challenges, but Open Door has remained a premier, Christian-based preschool. -Steve Van Dyke, Chair, Open Door Board



Jerry Suko Resigns

Long time Open Door Board Member Jerry Suko announced his retirement from the board during the September 29 Directors meeting. Jerry has held many roles during his 20+ year affiliation with this organization. He has been Board co-chair, building and grounds coordinator, fill-in cook, chaperone on field trips, and van driver, as well as volunteering for many special projects and events. We will miss

his knowledge and many talents as well as his dedication to our children and families. We are fortunate to see him as he is busy taking care of McCabe UMC. The children all know his name and welcome him whenever they see him in the building. Thank you, Jerry, for all the kind attention you have given to the Open Door over these many years.

Pat Ivey Retires

Pat Ivey, longtime after school aide, retired on October 12th. She has been a faithful employee since May 1, 2012, caring for and helping with the children from 3:30-5:30 pm each school day. She has also served as a substitute classroom assistant when the need arose.



We all are missing her. The children drew pictures for her that they made into cards so she will remember them and know how thankful we are to have had her kind attention at school. She has told them she will keep in contact with them. It has been a blessing to have Pat as part of

our Open Door family. Best wishes to Pat in her retirement.

Thank You and Best Wishes

Open Door Job Position

Are you interested in being an important part of the lives of our preschool children, or do you know someone who might be? The Open Door is accepting applications for a part time Teacher Aide. Hours are 3:30-5:30 pm school days. Call Jolene at 222-3004 or apply at 1030 North 6th Street, Bismarck, ND.

Volunteer Focus

Marilyn Johnson has been a long term volunteer for the Open Door. She has enthusiastically and cheerfully taken on a variety of responsibilities including board membership, mailing and distribution of the Open Door *Witness* newsletter, and numerous special fund raisers and projects, as well as appearing occasionally with treats for our children. Over the past several years Marilyn has regularly processed books at least twice a year for our library and recently completed processing about 200 books donated by Friends of the Library. It obviously is difficult for this professional librarian to separate herself from her life's work.

As a dedicated board member, Marilyn has represented Legacy UMC. In November she will be introducing two new representatives from that church and will retire. It is our good fortune, however, that she will continue to volunteer with the newsletter and special projects.



Marilyn has been a valuable volunteer at the Open Door. We deeply appreciate all her efforts on our behalf, and we are thankful she will continue to share her talents for the benefit of the children and staff. Thank you, Marilyn, for brightening our day each time you visit.

The Importance of Books



Books are a critical resource in developing literacy skills and literature appreciation for people of all ages.

Reading proficiency is a critical building block for a good education, and books play an essential role in developing literacy skills for preschool children.

The Open Door maintains a school library of approximately 4,000 books that play an important role

in our day. We are learning the alphabet and words every day and teachers use books and other print media to enhance themes and concepts being taught. The children enjoy story time twice a day and we have library day on Fridays.

Recently, the Friends of the Library (Bismarck Veteran's Memorial Library) donated about 200 books to the Open Door. Each child at the center selected a book to take home. Some of the books were processed to use in our school library, and others will be shared with the McCabe UMC neighborhood through the Little Library, located just west of the church.

The Little Library, created by the Open Door when it was located on South 12th Street, saw high usage by neighborhood residents who borrowed and brought books to share with others. It sometimes needed to be restocked, but often visitors maintained the supply. Since relocating to McCabe UMC, the Little Library has seen an ever greater turnover of books, and it often times is overflowing. The variety of books has also changed with the focus shifting from mainly children's books and the



always at least one Bible to novels, biographies, arts and crafts, and non-fiction books.

We greatly appreciate the thoughtfulness of Friends of the Library and individuals who think of us and supply literacy resources to our preschool and the neighborhood. They demonstrate the joys of sharing and of life-long learning to our children, and for that we are thankful.



Lions and Pediatric Partners Screenings



Although the corona virus pandemic has limited visitors to the Open Door, we felt it was necessary to allow our annual vision and developmental screenings to help identify any concerns that the parents and staff had about our children. All safety guidelines were

followed. Parental permission slips were needed for the screenings to be conducted, and screenings were offered to the families at no cost.

The Lions of North Dakota conducted an early childhood vision screening. Many preschool-aged children have vision problems but it is not always obvious that such a problem is present. Screening tests are not the same as a complete eye examination. Children for whom concerns are identified by the screening are referred for treatment. Five of our children were referred to see an eye care professional.

A specialist from Pediatric Partners conducted an individualized early childhood developmental screening for all our children. Five areas were included: physical (gross and fine motor skills); cognitive (thinking, learning, problem solving); communication (talking, listening, understanding); social/emotional (playing, feeling secure, happy); and self-help (eating, dressing). The screenings were done over three mornings. Open Door staff contacted parents within 48 hours to share and discuss results.

We appreciate the services of the Lions Club and Pediatric Partners so that we may provide the most appropriate services to our children and families.

SPURS

The University of Mary SPURS service group has been faithful in hosting holiday parties for our children for many years. This includes a Halloween, Christmas, Valentine and Easter party. About eight members of the group would arrive with games, crafts, stories, treat bags, and other seasonal activities. This year with no visitors allowed at the center they still wanted to do something for the children.

On November 6th the SPURS dropped off supplies and treat bags for a fall party that the OD teachers carried out and shared with the children. We are thankful for the SPURS and their positive role modeling for our children.



Volunteer Hours

During the second quarter of 2020, 45 hours were volunteered in activities that support the Open Door. For the third quarter of 2020, 29 hours were contributed. The lower number of hours reflects the closure of the Open Door from March 18 through August 16 because of the corona virus pandemic. We extend our sincerest "thank you" to all who so generously share their time and talents to support the mission of the Open Door.

Gifts to the Open Door

The Open Door has been blessed by many thoughtful people who support our mission with their prayers, presence, gifts, and services. Thank you very much for remembering us so generously. The following identifies contributors between June 1 and November 15, 2020.

Monetary gifts were given for unspecified purposes in memory or in honor of a loved one, or as a donation for general use.

Cleveland UMC, Cleveland, ND
Dakotas Conference UMW, Dickinson, ND
Layton Freeborg, Underwood, ND
Sterling UMC, Sterling, ND
Steele UMC, Steele, ND
Dick and Pat Unkenholz, Prescott, AZ

Materials and supplies have been donated by the following persons and church families.

Jessica Farrell, Bismarck, ND – art supplies, beads, calculator, box of staples, pencils, books, glitters, paints, charcoal pencils
Jerry and Linda Suko, Bismarck, ND – 2 Fire 7 (Kindles), 22 plastic pencil cases
Steve Van Dyke, Mandan, ND – boxes of crayons
Karen Workman, Bismarck, ND – 10 bottles of Tempra paint, one case plus 4 packages of copier paper



Wish List

Below is a list of some items that we would be grateful to receive. If you have questions about specific items, please contact Jolene at 701-222-3004. Thank you.

Watercolors paints in tray
Jello cups; cookie, brownie, muffin mixes
Paper towels and paper napkins
Scotch and masking tape
Spiral notebooks

Electric pencil sharpener
Liquid hand soap
Play-Doh
Copier paper in colors – blue, green, yellow, pink, green, red, purple, orange
DVD Blue Ray player

(From the Director, continued from page 1)
ND Department of Health, McCabe UMC trustees, and the Open Door Board of Directors.

Prevention and increased sanitation receive constant attention. Parents or guardians are required to wear masks and use hand sanitizer as they enter the building, and they must drop off children at the classroom entrance. Children have their temperature taken with a no-contact thermometer and the usual wellness check is done before entering the classroom. Children with a 101 degree or higher temperature or symptoms are sent home. Staff members rather than parents sign the children out at the end of the day. There is regular communication with parents and between staff regarding policy updates and changes.

In the classroom we frequently review with our children the need for hand hygiene and covering coughs/sneezes in our elbow, and each child needs his or her own water bottle from home because water fountains are not being used. To reduce handling of classroom equipment and toys, some have been removed and access to others is limited. Each child has his or her own case for holding crayons, pencils, glue, markers, and scissors. Toys and supplies are sanitized with greater frequency.

Considerable attention is given to maintaining physical distancing in the classroom. Our class of 20 is divided into two pods of 10 children who stay together as a group all day. The two teachers rotate activities with their pod. The children are limited to one child at each center and this has resulted in fewer opportunities to develop social skills which are a very important aspect of preschool curriculum. It's not the same to play in the house center by yourself. Children are coping by talking to others across the room. It's a little more noisy but necessary to allow them to interact with others. A much enjoyed usual activity of our children is having visitors, such as guest readers and the SPURS organization that provides holiday parties. This is not possible this school year. Similarly, the annual fall Open House was cancelled.

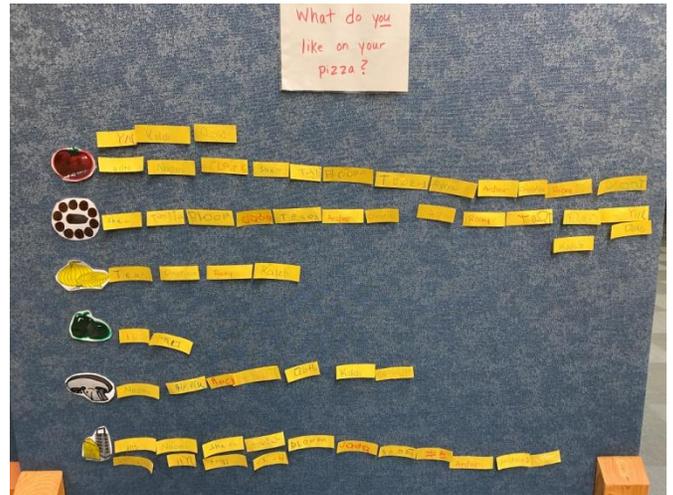
We are fortunate to have available the large open area of McCabe's Fellowship Hall, which is just across the corridor from our classroom. Lunch is held in the Fellowship Hall. Instead of four children at a table as previously, there are now only two. Nap time has changed little as to cot placement, although blankets must be stored in large plastic bags rather than storing them in totes. These items are washed weekly. Outside time has been somewhat increased, as possible and appropriate, since physical distancing for that activity is less difficult to maintain.

The children seem to be knowledgeable at their

appropriate age level concerning the corona virus. We have been developing coping techniques to deal with emotional responses of both the children and staff.

Even with everything being as it is, it's still good to be back in the classroom with the children. And we look forward to the time when normal interaction and usual classroom activities are allowed.

Please keep you and yours safe, and be kind.
 Jolene Stading Puhalla, Director



Clockwise from top left: water coloring at a safe physical distance; learning about graphing by counting kids who like different toppings on their pizza; popcorn painting to make interesting shapes and designs; using tangrams to develop eye-hand coordination and patterns; and making interesting colorful paintings with our feet and toes , a very challenging skill.



Clockwise from upper left: artwork that requires eye-hand coordination, scissor skills, color naming, organization of elements, and *possibly* some sticky glue in the wrong place; jack-o-lantern bowling at the Halloween party; taking a walk with Teacher Assistant Jean to explore the capitol grounds; playing a game of air hockey in Fellowship Hall; and cook Tina Mitchell offers Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, and Red Delicious apples for a taste test.



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The Board and staff of the Open Door wish you a happy, healthy, and most joyous Christmas season. We are truly thankful for your generous support.

Open Door Community Center Mission
Through the Open Door Community Center, children and families receive Christian-based education and support services, enriching them to become responsible members of their families and community.

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