



Feb/March 2023 Newsletter for Families

Riverhouse by the Numbers

Total number of classrooms (2 Prek, 2 Toddler, 2 Infant)	6
Number of infants - Chickadees (8) & Hummingbirds (8)	16
Number of toddlers - Sparrows (13) & Blue Jays (16)	29
Number of Pre-K children - Falcons (19) & Eagles (12)	31
Number of children who will be 4 by October 1st	15
Current number of teaching staff: full-time-17, part-time- 7	24

**School Photos! - Tues & Wed March 14th & 15th 9:30 to 11:00 am
with Bailey Parker, A/M Photography**

- DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR:**
- **SPRING PICTURES! March 14th & 15th**
 - * March Parent's Night Out.....March 11th (Sat)
 - * Daylight Saving Time begins.....March 12th
 - * March Board of Directors Mting..... March 16th(Thur)
 - * St Patrick's Day Activities.....March 17th (Fri)
 - * Spring Break - NO SCHOOLMarch 20-24th
 - * Riverhouse Easter Egg Hunt April 7th (Fri)
(families invited, 4 pm Friday)
 - * Last day of Spring SemesterMay 26th

Table of Contents

Universal PreK----- page 2
 Our New Nurse ----- page 2
 Facility Update ----- page 2
 Parent's Night Out..... page 2
 100 Women Who Care.....page 3
 Thank You page 4
 Classroom News ----- page 4
 New Program Director..... page 5
 Staff Update..... page 5
 Thoughts from the Director....page 6
 Trauma & Childrenpage 7

RIVERHOUSE HOURS: 7:30 am to 4:45 pm



Colorado Universal PreK - Update!

Yes - the cost of your 4 year old's tuition will go down



In a nutshell: Colorado UPK is 15 hours of free childcare for 4 year olds, starting in the 2022-2023 school year. You don't need to qualify - everyone gets it - but you do need to sign up at : UPK.Colorado.Gov

The state will confirm all "matches" by March 30th. If you already have a spot here, you will be confirmed, if - and only if - you went on the website and claimed that spot. Otherwise, it goes to another family in Durango that is trying to get childcare for his/her four-year-old. (We have NO control over this!)

Children or families who qualify for CCCAP (Colorado's Child Care Assistance Program) or other funding sources (Head Start, for example) can stack UPK on top of those hours. Families can also privately pay for other hours. All combinations of payment will be allowed with participating providers. So, your child can go to childcare for 40 hours, and you can pay for 25 privately, and have 15 paid for. Riverhouse is a participating provider.

On February 27th, the matching process will begin with the first batch of applications. On March 30th, families who applied in the first round will receive an email from the state letting them know which provider they matched with and what the next steps for enrollment are.

Riverhouse's New Nurse: Bonnie Liebscher



Riverhouse has a new nurse as of February 1st. Bonnie Liebscher currently serves three other centers, so she is very familiar with the needs of a childcare center. She also works in Labor & Delivery at Mercy Hospital. Bonnie is a sixth-generation Durangoan - she and her husband have started the seventh generation with their son, one year old Clay. She loves to do anything outdoors including skiing, biking, and hiking, and lives on a small hobby farm. I am very happy to welcome Bonnie to the Riverhouse family. She is very excited to be here and is happy to discuss any concerns or questions with families. Her email is: bonniewaller94@gmail.com

TLC (Tender Loving Care) Requests....



Everyone has rough days, especially our most vulnerable children who have many emotions and not enough words. If your little one is having a rough morning, you can just let us know by saying he or she is having a TLC day - we won't ask questions, (tell us as little or as much as you care to or have time to), but we'll be sure to direct a little more love and support to your child.

Facility Update

- * We have rearranged the upstairs office to accommodate our administrative restructuring.
- * Our lobby has been rearranged to show off staff photos, and to have a “library” of children’s books and clothing that parents may take free of charge.
- * We are looking into putting cameras throughout the center. The Board is currently getting bids to see if it’s feasible.



PLEASE REMEMBER to wash your hands & your child’s hands upon entering Riverhouse!

Saturday Parent’s Night Outs

Once a month we offer “Parent’s Night Out” - two staff members sign-up to watch your child(ren) at a cost of \$25 for one child or \$40 for two children. Next PNO is Saturday, March 11th from 4 to 7 pm. Sign-up sheet is in the upstairs lobby entrance. It is capped at 10 children, so sign-up early.

In April, we’ll be assessing whether or not to keep Saturdays for date night, or go back to Fridays.

KIDS CLOTHING IN THE LOBBY

- is up for grabs for anyone (take what you wish). We are building a clothing and book “library,” where people can take what they need but they won’t have to bring it back!



RED BALL FUNDRAISER - Thank you for purchasing tickets!

A Riverhouse ticket didn’t win one of the prizes, but we did raise over \$2,000 for Riverhouse - & that’s a big win in itself! Because of the way tickets were registered, we couldn’t determine which classroom purchased the most.

Therefore, we put all 6 class names in a hat and had Jocelyn (an 8 month old baby who’s now helping her mom in the office) pull one out. The winner was Chickadees (I know it seems rigged being that Jocelyn is a baby herself, but it really was on the up and up!) Chickadees staff get pizza and the babies get a new toy!

1 + 100 Women Who Care (About Riverhouse!) 😊

The one woman is Bonnie Miller, a local mother, grandmother, and community activist. The 100 Women are an amazing philanthropic group here in Durango that “want to make an immediate and positive impact in the community.” They gather four times a year at which time each woman donates \$100. The group collectively listens to, and votes on, a local nonprofit which will receive their combined donation. In January, Bonnie Miller nominated us. She well understands the challenge that working parents face when they need childcare - the challenge of finding quality care, and the challenge of paying for it. She is also very sensitive to the teachers who do a very demanding job in a consistently caring and nurturing way, teaching with knowledge of child development - not just “babysitting.” Bonnie gave a moving speech promoting our teachers and how they need more support, then the 100 + women voted, and Riverhouse won! We won over \$10,000 to help our staff with medical expenses in the absence of health insurance. And we are eligible for a \$5,000 matching grant from the Anschutz Foundation. How wonderful is that? We’ll give you an update in a few months about how these funds are being utilized. Here’s the link for 100 Women if you’re interested! <https://www.100womenwhocarelaplata.com/>

THANK YOUs - to volunteer, **Prudencio Dimas (dad of Rio & Hawk)** for your invaluable computer help. We'd be disconnected without you! For Community Supporter **Rob Ptolemy** for believing in what we do by consistently offering financial support to Riverhouse. We are so grateful. And to Community Supporter **Bonnie Miller** for her incredible faith in us - not once, but twice, promoting our cause in a big way! (See page 2 about 100 Women Who Care).

Classroom News - our Older kids!



Eagles with Ms. Haylee & Mikhaela & Ameena..... The Eagles are getting to know their new Lead, Haylee. She has been focusing on the themes of animals and their

habitats and will be making dioramas as a culminating activity. The Eagles are all being tested (by Becky & Haylee) for kindergarten readiness - now and in May! This group of 4 and 5 year olds is the kindest, most fun group of PreK kids- they are great learners and they have a great sense of humor. Overheard recently: Emmitt talking about his twin, Brooke: "I am older! She came after me even though she looks ginormous!"

Falcons with Ms. Lexi + Callie, Ace, Mikhaela & Shantay... The Falcons have been studying space (the kids joked that Riverhouse is in space!) and now they'll be learning word recognition and pre-writing skills. In Feb. they went on a field trip to JBo's Pizzeria and loved it!! When Kiana's dad, Matt, asked the kids about what toppings they like, Kiana yelled out "pineapple and olives!"

Blue Jays with Ms Rie, Kathy, Makayla & Hannah



The Blue Jays have been working with the color red, the letter V for Valentine, and the number six. The theme for the month is Love & Families,

integrated into arts and crafts, books, music and more. Ryah and Hawk were hugging each other hello one morning when Ryah noticed Eli and said, "Eli too!" and made sure to make their circle bigger. How sweet is that?

Classroom News - the Youngest!

Sparrows with Brooke & Jess, Callie D. & often Primrose... Sparrows have been enjoying their sensory play with baby oil and flour in big trays (in their sensory table). They're working on name recognition for everyone. Mara already says everyone's names. "She just loves to talk," says Brooke. She comes in and says "My friends!" and one day she looked at Isaiah and said "Isaiah you're such a good friend!" Mara, you're such a good talker!

Hummingbirds (12-18 months) with Angelique, Lupita & Darcy.

Darcy moved up from the baby room to the Hummingbirds so the babies moving up would have someone familiar there. Everyone agrees it's working well. The infants have been working on barnyard sounds. Lenna is working on her own fashion style, and Laney and Ariana are having regular debates where Laney says "yep!" and Ariana says "no!" Maybe they're running for mayor of Riverhouse?



Chickadees - with Jeana, Heather, Jayda and now Claudia.

In the baby room, they're working on preparing the babies for moving up to the Hummingbirds, by teaching them about getting their hands washed, and getting them on a more regular sleep and eating schedule. These women do an amazing job at helping the babies to regulate their emotions, as they soothe and comfort them all day long!

Staff Update - In February and March, we have some new faces as we replace people who have had to leave us for various reasons. Autumn has decided to leave her regular shifts and simply help out as a substitute. Rebecca and Jemma both left to go to other childcare centers that are part of a much larger corporation that can offer full benefits. Tetiana comes to us from Ukraine where she was a teacher of English. She has two elementary aged children (one boy, one girl) who attend Riverview. Claudia is a friend of Lupita's. She has worked at the Rochester Hotel for the past two and a half years, and really wants to work with young children and work on her English skills; we suspect she has a heart as big as Lupita's. Please welcome our new staff members.

<p>Eagles Lead: Haylee Swanson Aides: Mikhaela Johnson & Ameena Hobbs</p>	<p>Falcons Lead: Lexi McMinn Aides: Callie Moss, Mikhaela Johnson, Acelyn Samora, Shantay White & Tetiana Sydorenko</p>
<p>Blue Jays: Co-Leads Rie Howley & Kathy Clark. Aides: Makayla Tahe & Hannah Chapman Frequent guest aide: Primrose Bloom</p>	<p>Sparrows Lead: Brooke McMinn Aide: Jess Alvarez Aide: Callie Decker - M,W,F</p>
<p>Hummingbirds: Teacher Lead: Angelique Cather Aides: Lupita Gonzalez & Darcy Diaz</p>	<p>Chickadees Lead: Jeana Cooper Aides: Jayda Arguelles, Heather Walters & Claudia Rogers</p>

Kitchen Staff: Margaret Brown & Bailey Fogel & Ja'Nae Temple

Facility Caretaker: Dan Howley

Teacher Floater: Primrose Bloom

Substitute Heroes: Kim Rabick, Kym Parino, Kate Blakely, Hillary Adler, Autumn Ford

Meet our new Program Director: Angie Coombs!

Hi Friends and Families,

My name is Angela Coombs, Riverhouse's new Program Director. I am coming from Farmington, NM where I was the Director at Promiseland Child Development Center for the last year and a half. I received my bachelors from Oregon State University in Human Development and Family Sciences with a focus in Early Childhood Education. I have spent approximately 15 years in early childhood where I have been everything from the dishwasher to Lead Teacher and most recently Director.

I knew from a very early age that I wanted to be a teacher and have truly found my calling. I absolutely love early childhood and getting the opportunity to watch little minds grow and develop. Since stepping into the director role I have discovered that mentoring teachers is just as rewarding as working in the classroom. Establishing high quality child care classrooms starts with our teachers but I believe teacher mentorship is missing from the majority of early childhood classrooms and centers. I love supporting teachers in their journey, problem solving, and watching them fall in love with our littlest students

In addition to my work at Riverhouse, I have 3 children of my own Wyatt (5), Charlie (3), and Grayson (2). Wyatt goes to kindergarten in Farmington while Charlie and Grayson come with me to Riverhouse (Charlie in the Falcon room and Grayson in the Bluejays).

A fun fact about me is that I was the Lead Teacher in the Eagles room before I had my babies. Returning to Riverhouse 6 years later and bringing my own children with me has truly been a blessing. Going from teacher to mother and lead to director has given me a unique perspective at Riverhouse and I can't wait to see where this next adventure takes us. I am looking forward to building relationships with all of you and invite you to reach out if you ever have a comment, question, or concern.

-Ms. Angie

Thoughts from the Director...

We are six weeks into 2023 and I am looking forward to spending my first full year as the director of Riverhouse. It's been eight months and so far - with the help of the Board of Directors, and the other 2022 administrators (Lexi and Chloe), we have accomplished so much that we can be proud of. This includes: 1) a facility makeover. We cleaned, painted, repaired, de-cluttered, and survived a minor flood in the middle of the summer. We continue to improve the fire exit, and make cosmetic and functional changes. 2) By raising tuition we raised wages by at least \$2.00 an hour for every employee - the only way we'd be able to attract and retain quality staff in today's economy. 3) We did an administrative audit in November - an audit that led to a new onboarding process, better training of staff, better communication, an updated staff handbook, a risk management plan, and knowledge of where we're still lacking.



The Board and the administrative team have several goals for the new year. The administrative team believes that with our new Program Director, and with our new part-time Administrative Coordinator (Janel Drelicharz - who used to be our Chickadees Lead Teacher), we will be able to prevent administrative burnout, improve our staff retention system, and prepare Riverhouse for our state regulatory visit in April. Every 3 years, each center is rated on a system called SHINES - SHINES is a state quality rating and improvement system that monitors and supports early learning programs.

The quality of our curriculum and daily routines addressing language development, music and movement, art, fine motor development, social-emotional learning, and more are all assessed. There is a close examination of our physical spaces and how we use them, our administrative processes, our communication with families, our family programs, our training of staff, and more. We are currently rated a 3 on a 1 to 5 scale. 3 is considered very good, but 4 is the goal (in La Plata county, only the Durango Learning Center has a 4 - and no one has a 5).

Other more modest goals for the year include increasing our sub pool, offering a sound alternative to the new state requirement that all businesses with more than 15 employees must offer a retirement plan, and ensuring that all families receive a developmental assessment providing information on where their child is at for his or her age. Our more ambitious goals include partnering with the Latino community to offer them childcare space on weekends, creating a pilot bilingual program in some of our regular classrooms, and providing the staff with health insurance or health wellness benefits.

Your part in this is to keep giving us feedback.... How are we doing? How can we do better? In March, you'll receive a Parent Survey that will help guide us in our ongoing school improvement plans. Thank you for your understanding when we have to close due to weather, for understanding when we have to bring another new teacher onboard because we couldn't retain someone whom your child loved, and for understanding when we ask you to do an additional state sign-up form or to help us out because we don't have the money or skills to fix a problem. We are the most heavily regulated human service industry because we serve the most vulnerable population. We live with the constant awareness that our shortcomings and mistakes must be minor and few - which is why your support is so greatly appreciated.

- Becky

The Easiest Way to Give \$ to RH... Have a portion of your Amazon and City Market purchases donated to Riverhouse! All you have to do is sign up and go shopping! Find instructions on signing up at this link:

<https://www.riverhousecci.org/city-market-cares-amazon-smiles>

And please pass on this info to anyone in your family who shops at these places!

