



## January 2023 Newsletter for Families

### Riverhouse by the Numbers

Deadline for In-house tuition subsidies	Jan 16th
Universal PreK portal opens for applications	Jan 17th
Universal PreK begins in Colorado	July 1st
# hours Riverhouse is open as of Jan 16th (7:30 to 4:45 pm)	9.25 hrs
New minimum wage in Colorado - as of Jan 1st	\$13.65
Starting wage at Riverhouse	\$15.00

### **NEW EXTENDED HOURS:**

***Starting January 16th, we are happy to report that we are extending our hours:***

***Drop-off: Begins at 7:30 am***

***Pick-up: Lasts until 4:45 pm***

***We feel we are finally in a good position with staffing so we can make this happen.***

***Thanks for your patience until we could do this!***

### **DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR:**

- \*Deadline for Tuition Subsidies Applications  
(for Jan-May period).....Jan 16th (Mon)
- \* New hours begin, FLC students return...Jan 16th (Mon)
- \* January Board of Directors Meeting..... Jan 19th (Thur)
- \* January Parent's Night Out..... Jan 27th (Fri)
- \* TEACHER WORK DAY (State Mandatory  
Training for CPR and 1st Aid)..... Jan 30th (Mon)  
NO SCHOOL for children
- \* RED BALL FUNDRAISER -----All of January!
- \* Snowdown & end of Redball.....Friday, Feb 3rd
- \* February Parent's Night Out.....Feb 14th (Tues)

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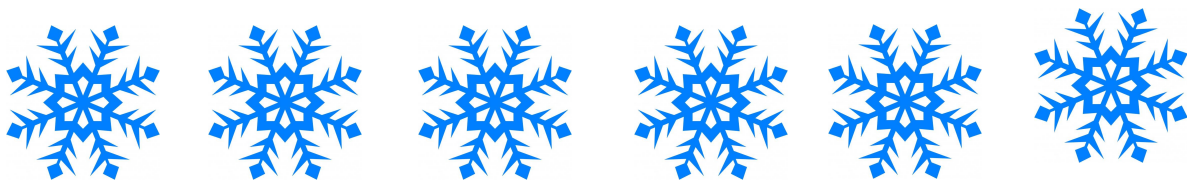
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## **Snow Closures - it's a balancing act!**

*To close or not to close - that is the question! When the snow is falling, employees are calling - Are we going to close? Our policy is to follow Durango 9-R's, but - when possible - we will try to do a two-hour delay, even if the school district closes. Family needs are why we're all here. If Durango School District closes, and it looks like the weather is only going to get worse, we will close. Otherwise, even if Durango SD closes, as long as the weather looks like it will improve, (like on January 3rd), we'll try the delay.*

*One more challenge: we can not simply put any teacher in any classroom. Each room needs a certified Lead (or Lead-in-training). Each infant room needs teachers who are trained for that particular age group. We will send out an Alert on Brightwheel when the sky is storming & let you know what's happening at Riverhouse: Open? 2-hour delay? Or a dreaded closure?*



## **PARKING LOT & SNOW**

### **SPACE for DROP-OFF...**

*Hopefully, the extended hours will result in less traffic congestion in the parking lot. On snowy, icy days please try not to use the church parking lot - too many opportunities for a slip or fall. We are having as many staff as possible (read: all without a medical need) park outside of the lot so there are more spots for parents. Thank you for how careful you are in the lot. It shows.*

### **Facility Update**

- The kitchen has a new dishwasher which will help us with time spent doing clean-up
- We are ordering new TORK paper towel dispensers for the Eagles, Falcons & Blue Jays
- We have had no need for a major repair in December - just snow removal!

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**PLEASE REMEMBER** to wash your hands & your child's hands upon entering Riverhouse! Upstairs there is a sink in the lobby, near the sign-in computer; downstairs - the bathroom. It's cold outside, but the hot season for viruses. Covid19, RSV, and the flu are all circulating around town. We have been doing great at keeping sickness in check - and thank you for your part in that success!

### **Regular 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 (\$40 for two) to the staff. Next PNO is Friday, Jan 27th. Sign-up sheet is in the upstairs lobby entrance. It is capped at 10 children, so sign-up early.

In February, we'll be offering this on a Tuesday so we can offer parents a chance to get away for a Valentine's Day date, if desired.

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 27th**  
**&**  
**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14th**

## Colorado Universal PreK - What is it?



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. The portal opens on Jan. 17th:

<https://cdec.colorado.gov/colorado-universal-preschool>

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.

Sign up anytime over the next few months. Then, up to 15 hours of your childcare will be paid starting in July or August (not exactly sure when, yet!)



### RED BALL FUNDRAISER

(LINKED WITH SNOWDOWN!)

Each year, the weeks before Snowdown, Riverhouse sells tickets to the RedBall Express! Tickets are only \$5 each and buy you a chance to win up to \$5,000. Actual red balls are rolled down 11th Street (by Alpine Bank) - this year on Friday, February 3rd at 5 pm. (You do not need to be present to win).

Classrooms here at Riverhouse are in competition to see which classroom's parents & staff can sell the most tickets. The classroom with the most sales gets a pizza party for the children and staff, and the purchase of a new toy for the room (and fame too, of course)! You can buy tickets by using the link below. Or, you can put \$5.00 in an envelope outside your child's classroom, and buy a paper ticket from us, that we will use to register your entry online.

Riverhouse has had winning tickets 7 years in a row! (We used to be the top selling nonprofit!) Our goal is to raise \$1,000 from this. For every \$5.00 ticket purchased, \$4.00 is raised for Riverhouse so we would only need to sell 250 tickets. (Lexi reports that she once sold 100 tickets by herself! - so beat Lexi! 😊)

<https://www.durangoredball.com/riverhouse-childrens-center/events/2/buy-tickets>

## **Classroom News - our Older kids!**



**Eagles with Ms. Rebecca - (+ Mikhaela & Ameena.....)** Starting in February (on Wed the 1st) nap time in the Eagles' classroom will be 12:45 to 2pm.

As these students get closer to being kindergarteners, we're weaning them from the 2 hour nap/quiet time. They're learning about space and counting to 25. The whole class has decided that they're Ms. Rebecca's baby spiders & they protest when the day is ending!

**Falcons with Ms. Mic (+ Callie, Ace, & Mikhaela)** The Falcons are learning about days of the week and practicing their names. Every time they are doing a music/movement activity, and a commercial comes on the iPad, the children shout "ad!" The Falcons love their book time with Mic and staying off their "lava floor"!

**Blue Jays with Ms Rie, Makayla, & Autumn.** The Blue Jays said good-bye to 5 children who moved up to the Falcons' room (Hunter, Mya, Oliver, Julia, and Elsie) and said hello to Lana, Hawk, and Cierra (they're doing so well!) It's been so fun to watch all the children learning to "Go on a Bear Hunt"! Eli told Ms. Rie - "it's very important we have our banoc'lurs for the bear hunt!" They are also learning about Arctic animals and letters.

## **Classroom News - the Youngest!**

**Sparrows with Brooke (+ Jess, Callie D. & Acelyn)** Did you know Brooke gets teary-eyed just taking down the Sparrows' art work? It's true - the Sparrows teachers are sooo attached to these kids, and the kids to them. They've been learning about shapes this month. When one Sparrow, Mara, returned from a family trip to Mexico she was talking about the whales and how they were "really big baby sharks!"



**Hummingbirds (12-18 months)**

Everyone loves the Hummingbirds! They are almost always so happy. Lupita has been caught singing to them in both

English and Spanish - and they love it! They're all working on the big one: Walking! And using their utensils. When Angelique goes to use the iPad for music, George & Miles are ready to have their pictures taken!

**Chickadees** -In the baby room, babies are working on tummy time and head control. Willa is learning to sit up, and one day baby Forest rolled over to cuddle with her! Our newest baby, George, is always so happy to see any staff visiting the room.



## **NAP TIME CHANGE...**

Starting in January, nap time hours for our older classrooms is from 12:45 to 2:45. For the Eagles classroom, in February, it will be 12:45 to 2:00.

This will make an easier transition for our kids: from lunch, and lunch clean-up, straight to naps. Most kids are ready for sleep or quiet time at 12:45... and waking at 2:45 instead of 3 will allow more outdoor time, and have kids more ready if parents want to pick them up early. In nicer weather, the Eagles will have the playground to themselves from 2 to 2:45....



**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!

**Staff Update** - in January some staff hours will be changing as we work with staff who will have new college schedules. Who's in college? Callie Moss & Mic in the Falcons; Makayla in the Blue Jays; + Ameena, Jayda, & Jemma

<p><b>Eagles Lead:</b> Rebecca Peckumn  <b>Aides:</b> Mikhaela Johnson &amp; Ameena Hobbs</p>	<p><b>Falcons Lead:</b> Mic Anderson  <b>Aides:</b> Callie Moss / Mikhaela Johnson          Acelyn Samora &amp; Shantay</p>
<p><b>Blue Jays Teacher Lead-in Training:</b>          Donna Marie (Rie) Howley  <b>Aides:</b> Kathy Clark &amp; Autumn Ford  <b>Aides:</b> Makayla Tahe</p>	<p><b>Sparrows Lead:</b> Brooke McMinn  <b>Aide:</b> Jess Alvarez  <b>Aide:</b> Callie Decker - M,W,F  <b>Aide:</b> Acelyn Samora - T/Th</p>
<p><b>Hummingbirds: Teacher Lead-in-Training:</b>          Angelique Cather  <b>Aide:</b> Lupita Gonzalez &amp; Heather Walters  <b>Pt Aides:</b> Lauren Pharrell &amp; Taylor Hall</p>	<p><b>Chickadees Lead:</b> Jeana Cooper  <b>Aide:</b> Darcy Diaz  <b>Aide:</b> Kathy Clark  <b>Pt Aide:</b> Jayda Arguelles &amp; Jemma Chapel</p>

**Kitchen Staff:** Margaret Brown & Bailey Fogel - & sometimes Darsi Olson

Facility Caretaker: Dan Howley

Teacher Floater: Primrose Bloom

Substitute Heroes: Kim Rabick, Kym Parino, Marty Shanks, Kate Blakely, Hillary Adler

**Meet 2 of our newest employees:**

**Heather Walters.** Heather lives in Aztec where she grew up on a ranch (yes, she can manage a herd of cattle as well as a roomful of children!) She has two big dogs, and a fiance with plans for a wedding next fall. Heather loves working in childcare, and will start working towards her CDA later this year so she can eventually be a Lead Teacher. She is currently working in the Hummingbird Room with the 12 to 18 month old children and loves that age group.

**Shantay White.** Shantay was born in Idaho, but has grown up in the Durango/Ignacio area. She and her partner, Adam, live on a small farm where they have lots of animals (pigs, cows, horses, goats, chickens). Together they have nine children (yes, 9!) ages 8 years to 21 years. When Shantay's sister passed away she took her children in as her own. Shantay has a background working with children with autism. She loves childcare - having fun with the kids, teaching them new things every day. "You definitely get attached!" she says.

**Staff Classroom Wish Lists:**

**Chickadees (babies)-** Baby Bouncer Seat with Music, Baby Alpine Bouncer, Wooden cozy play gym

**Hummingbirds -** Playmat rug, etch-a-sketch, Play-doh, toys that make sounds

**Sparrows -** Silky washable crayons, any art supplies, animal toys, Small construction truck toys

**Blue Jays -** cozy cube, bean bag chairs (child size), big stuffed animals to cuddle with

**Falcons -** Puzzles (ages 3 to 5 years) , Wicki stix, Counting sorting dinosaurs

**Fishing ABC game, Locks with numbers/matching game (called: Lakeshore Unlock It! Number Match), Boho calming corner posters**

**Eagles -** colorful lamps (with multiple heads that go in different directions), bean bags, wicki stix, social emotional toys



### Thoughts from the Director...

*I'd like to share a holiday story. I was in California visiting with my parents and sister's family. My mom and dad have been married for 65 years. Can you imagine? And what's more - they had four children in a 5 year time span (I was their third), living in a small apartment in Chicago with minimal family support, and without childcare. I am pretty sure it almost drove my mother nuts. When my younger brother, Mike, was born my mom was home all day with a four year old (my sister, Beth), a 2 year old (my older brother), myself at one, and then Mike, the newborn. My mom practically had her own childcare room, but unfortunately she was doing it 24/7. Needless to say, we all grew up learning to be pretty independent. Anyway, today my sister Beth and her husband have a son named Coby. He's now 35, married to a wonderful woman named Nina, who works full-time as a scientist for NASA. Coby and Nina have a three year old child, Nico. So at Christmas I ask them - "what about being parents has surprised you?" Boy, we were all surprised by their response! Coby says, "you all lied to us! You told us it was going to be the most wonderful thing... but our lives have been hell for the last 3 years. I can't believe we've survived it!" Now, don't get me wrong - Coby and Nina have a wonderful child. And they are great parents. But as they continued talking they said, "No one told us we wouldn't sleep for three years. No one told us that our daughter would scream bloody murder if Daddy, and not Mommy, got her a drink of water. No one told us that every aspect of our lives would be forever changed." It was funny.... Sort of. We all also felt a bit guilty. They were right. We're not entirely honest with new parents. We say "congratulations" and not "sorry for the loss of your carefree days!" We say - "How wonderful!" and not "You'll need our support more than you know." We sugarcoat this parenting thing. Parenting was literally the hardest thing I myself ever did. My ex-husband and I raised three children - one in a shared parenting situation and two whom we adopted at older ages (three and seven). Yes, it was eventually rewarding, but yes - it took its toll. So, in honor of all you parents out there who are exhausted, stressed out, or just feeling like you're surviving... we know that you need us, and we are aware that you need quality child care and support to get through the early childhood years. In short, you deserve all the support you can get.*

*So as the new year begins, I am reflecting on last year, and working with the Board to make plans for a successful 2023. We are expanding hours next week, and hopefully again by next fall. We are adding more parent programs, including regular Parent Night Outs. And I am including parenting tips or ideas in every newsletter. I hope they help.*

*You know what helps me? When some of you write letters sharing how much Riverhouse has helped you. I can use those when I write grants. I can use them to help boost staff morale. (I just received one for the Blue Jays room that thrilled every teacher in there). So, if you have the time, send me a quick email telling me what has helped you. And if you send me an email about something you want fixed, I promise to respond and try to fix it. I can't promise that I will - so many early childhood regulations are out of my hands, but I will try.*

*Thanks for being flexible when we have to close a room due to sickness, or delay a start due to weather, or when you and your child have to work with a new teacher or a sub instead of your usual teachers. I am currently super proud of the staff we have, and hope you are too.*

*- Becky*



**Activity Guide for Families of Preschoolers**  
 (provided by San Juan BOCES Child Find Team)



**TRY SOME of THESE ACTIVITIES for 3 to 5 YEAR OLDS...**

<p><b>For Language Development</b></p>	<p>1. <b>Talk, Read &amp; Sing everyday!</b>                  2. <b>Play “I spy...”</b> (something red) and build their vocabulary of familiar objects                  3. <b>Play “Answer the telephone”</b> - ring them on the phone and ask simple questions...  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the weather like?</li> <li>• What are you having for dinner?</li> </ul> </p>
<p><b>For Cognitive Development</b></p>	<p>1. <b>Say - “let’s play “Pretend” for 5 minutes. What would you like to pretend?”</b> Then do it!                  2. <b>Have the child tell the story of something that really happened - What did we do at the Rec Center today?</b>                  3. <b>Have the child count - the forks on the table, the people in the room, the legs on the dog... !</b></p>
<p><b>For Motor Development</b></p>	<p>1. <b>Move like an animal!</b> Tell them to “be a snake,” or “be a rabbit,” or “be a turtle”                  2. <b>Use blocks or Legos to build something “this tall”</b> (yo choose). Or use snow. Or pinecones.                  3. <b>Teach how to throw different objects: bean bags, balloons, nerf balls, rolled up foil balls...</b></p>
<p><b>For Social-Emotional Development</b></p>	<p>1. <b>Give advanced notice of a change...</b> “We will read one more book, then it’s time to _____. Which book do you want to read?” Giving choices helps to feel more in control.                  2. <b>Give words - but don’t ask questions - when they’re overwhelmed with emotion.</b> “It looks like you’re really mad because you can’t pet the cat.” “It looks like you’re really sad that Daddy is carrying you to the car, not Mommy.”                  3. <b>Speak in a calm but firm voice - don’t sound angry - and take the child to a “cozy corner” with a stuffed animal and pillows, where they can calm down.</b>                  4. <b>Give your child CHOICES, but do NOT negotiate.</b> You can have one more cookie before we go, or you can eat the cookie in the car. Do not negotiate how many cookies!</p>
<p><b>For Adaptive Development (learning self-care skills)</b></p>	<p>1. <b>Do simple chores together -sort socks, wipe off the table, put napkins on the table</b>                  2. <b>Practice getting dressed when no one is in a hurry. Give 2 choices of shirts, pants, etc. Then practice putting them on.</b>                  3. <b>Practice with zippers, buttons, or putting on shoes. It’s easier to do someone else’s - have them practice on you!</b></p>



**Riverhouse Children’s Center**  
 742 Florida Road  
 Durango, CO 81301  
 Ph: 970-247-0204

**Becky Malecki, Executive Director —— Kelly Tregillus, Board President**