



by [Dr. Latisho Smith](#), Educational Services Director

Hello families! It is an exciting time for Tri-County Head Start. Hiring has been a priority and we are pleased to be adding to our teams. First, we welcome Avery Axford, a new Pre-K teacher.

Hello! My name is Avery Axford. I am a new teacher here at Tri-County Head Start! I am from Colorado Springs, Colorado, but moved here for college at the University of Northern Iowa. I graduated in December with my Bachelors degree in Art Education. I love traveling, reading, and creating art. Something that I recently started to learn was crocheting fun things. I am so excited to be a part of Tri-County and can't wait to get to know your children!



Second, we congratulate one of our current staff members. Irene Sanchez recently accepted a new position within our agency. She is now the Dual Language Coordinator.



My name is Irene Sánchez and I am excited to step into the role of Dual Language Coordinator. Over the past five years at Tri-County Head Start, I have had the privilege of serving our wonderful children, families and staff. I am committed to continuing this journey with the same passion and dedication to ensuring our diverse community always feels they truly belong at Tri-County Head Start.

This month I also want to share the agency's GOLD assessment data from our winter checkpoint when compared with the fall checkpoint. Our teachers and home visitors continue to focus on individualizing lesson plans to meet the specific needs of children and assist them in their development for the remainder of the school year. Data from our final checkpoint will be reported in the summer months and we will make plans for fall professional development based on this year's overall data.

- For *Early Head Start*, the highest area of achievement remained *cognitive* with above 91% of children meeting and exceeding expectations
- For *Early Head Start*, *language* remained the highest area of need with over 25% of children below expectations; *math* followed closely with a little over 21% of children not meeting expectations; *social emotional* decreased from 25% of children below expectations in the fall to just over 19% in winter
- For *Head Start*, the highest area of achievement in Cedar Falls shifted from *physical* to *cognitive* with 91% of children meeting expectations; the Rural Partners had 93% of children meeting expectations in both *cognitive* and *literacy* and over 80% of all children meeting expectations in all other areas; Waterloo remained the highest in *physical* with 93% of children meeting expectations; for the remainder of center-based sites, teachers reported 90% or more of all children meeting expectations in all areas
- For *Head Start*, the highest area of need in Cedar Falls shifted to *social emotional* with 22% of children below expectations; for Waterloo the highest area of need remains *math* with 25% of children below expectations



## Tri-County Calendar

- April 8-12, 2024
  - *Week of the Young Child*
- April 22, 2024
  - *Policy Council*
- April 26, 2024
  - *No School due to Professional Development Day*
- May 9, 2024
  - *Graduation Ceremony at Waterloo Convention Center*
- May 27, 2024
  - *No School due to Memorial Day holiday*
- May 29, 2024
  - *Last Day of School*
- May 30, 2024
  - *Closed due to Staff Appreciation Day*

## Join the Celebration!

Tri-County Head Start will celebrate The Week of the Young Child April 8th-12th. Quality child care and education benefits everyone and is a critical piece to ensuring families can enter and stay in the workforce and children can thrive. As an agency we plan to showcase what early childhood education is all about. Talk to your child and ask your child's teachers about this special week. Make sure to check out our Facebook page for photos!

**naeyc**

### Week of the Young Child

**Music Monday**  
When children sing, dance, and listen to music, they develop their language and early literacy skills while being active and encouraging movement.

**Tasty Tuesday**  
This fun, food-themed day is about more than just cheese and crackers. Cooking together connects math with literacy skills, science, and more. With the rise in childhood obesity, you can encourage healthy nutrition and fitness habits at home and in the classroom.

**Work Together Wednesday**  
When children build together they explore math and science concepts and develop their social and early literacy skills. Children can use any building material—from a fort of branches on the playground to a block city in the classroom, or a hideaway made from couch pillows at home.

**Artsy Thursday**  
Think, problem solve, create! Children develop creativity, social skills and fine motor skills with open-ended art projects where they can make choices, use their imaginations, and create with their hands. On Artsy Thursday celebrate the joy and learning children experience when engaged in creative art making. Use any materials—from crayons to paint, clay to crafts!

**Family Friday**  
Engaging and celebrating families is at the heart of supporting our youngest learners. NAEVC applauds family members' role as young children's first and most important teachers.

Source: <https://www.naeyc.org/events/woygc/overview>

**April 6-12, 2024**



Three of our Head Start teachers (Dana Hanson, Ariel Young, April Boleyn) and our Education Specialist (Angela Syhlman) attended the Iowa Head Start Association Spring Conference in early April. They had the opportunity to hear from Dr. Tweety Yates and learn about supporting social emotional development in the classroom. We are glad these individuals were able to participate in this professional development opportunity!

## Waterloo Schools

by [Ashley Caldwell](#), Program Manager

### Happenings

April will see classrooms learning about spring weather, plants, flowers, patterns, beginning and ending letter sounds, and story retelling. Classrooms will be busy with field trips, outdoor learning experiences, and preparing our four-year-old preschool students for kindergarten transitions.



*Friends in Ms. Kovach's class at Highland enjoying science activities.*

### Important Dates & Reminders

- Kindergarten registration has opened for Waterloo Schools. Please complete this as soon as possible.
- May 10<sup>th</sup> is Kindergarten Orientation for Waterloo Schools.

### At Home Opportunities

As the weather begins to change, there will be a chance for severe weather with thunderstorms and tornadoes. A great teaching opportunity is to practice where the shelter area is in your home and where your flashlights are located. This will help your child know what to do and where to go in severe weather circumstances.



# Lily

by **Dusty Olson**, Program Manager

## Center Happenings

April showers bring May flowers and also jacket weather and mud! Spring is here and the children and staff at Lily are ready to enjoy the outdoors! Please bring jackets and sweatshirts so children can stay warm during this important time of their day.



## At Home Opportunities

- With spring in the air, it is an ideal time to get outdoors for walks and play time. Take notice and explore your neighborhood and community with your child. Children ages 0-5 learn through exploration and play.
- Predictable routines are key to reducing behavior challenges and while working on sleep patterns and toilet training.



## Reminders

- Please remember and use your access cards for drop off and pick up. We use this system for recordkeeping and to ensure the safety of everyone in our building.
- Accurate attendance is required by our agency and Head Start. Please make sure to sign your child in and out using the classroom tablet or Great Room tablet.



## Health

by **Pauline Jones**, Head Start/Early Head Start Health Coordinator;  
**Shana Smith** and **Darcie Stone**, UnityPoint Contracted Nurses

### Tornados

When a tornado is coming, you have only a short amount of time to make life-or-death decisions. Advance planning and quick response are the keys to surviving a tornado.

#### Tornado Danger Signs

- An approaching cloud of debris can mark the location of a tornado even if a funnel is not visible.
- Tornadoes generally occur near the trailing edge of a thunderstorm. It is not uncommon to see clear, sunlit skies behind a tornado.
- Rain-wrapped tornadoes are especially dangerous. They are common with heavy precipitation supercell thunderstorms, which frequently occur in Iowa. Supercell storms have been observed to generate the vast majority of long-lived and violent (EF2-EF5) tornadoes, as well as downburst damage and large hail.

Source: <https://ready.iowa.gov/tornadoes/>

#### How does Tri-County Head Start prepare?

We practice monthly tornado drills at our centers with staff and children. The drills occur at different times of the day each month. Signs are posted in every classroom to let everyone know where they should seek shelter.

The *Red Cross* urges everyone in the path of these storms to get prepared now and offers the following safety steps they should follow:

- Know the difference. A *tornado watch* means a tornado is possible. A *tornado warning* means a tornado is already occurring or will occur soon. Go to your safe place immediately. Watch for tornado danger signs: dark, often greenish clouds, wall clouds, and clouds of debris.



Download the free Red Cross Emergency App to receive emergency alerts and information about what to do in case of flooding, as well as locations of shelters. Users can find it in smartphone app stores by searching for the American Red Cross, going to [redcross.org/apps](https://redcross.org/apps), or texting "GETNADO" to 90999. Parents or guardians can also download the Red Cross Monster Guard: Prepare for Emergencies App for a fun game to teach children what to do in case of a flood, hurricane, or other disasters.



Safety Tips	
Know your community's warning system. Many communities use sirens intended for outdoor warning purposes.	Identify a safe place in your home to gather – a basement, storm cellar or interior room on the lowest floor with no windows. A small, windowless interior room or hallway on the lowest level of a sturdy building is the safest alternative.



<p>If you have time, move or secure items outside that can be picked up by the wind.</p>	<p>If you live in a mobile home, find a safe place in a nearby sturdy building. No mobile home is safe in a tornado.</p>
<p>If you have access to a sturdy shelter or a vehicle, go there immediately, using your seat belt if driving.</p>	<p>If you are outside, seek shelter in a basement, shelter or sturdy building.</p>
<p>If you cannot quickly walk to a shelter, immediately get into a vehicle and try to drive to the closest sturdy shelter. Remember to buckle your seat belt.</p>	<p>Stay away from bridge/highway overpasses. If strong winds and flying debris occur while driving, pull over and park, keeping your seat belt on and engine running. Put your head down below the windows, covering your head with your hands and a blanket.</p>
<p>Bring your companion animals indoors and maintain direct control of them.</p>	

### Basic Disaster Supplies Kit

To assemble your kit, store items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire disaster supplies kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers such as plastic bins or a duffel bag.

*A basic emergency supply kit could include the following items:*

- Water - one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food - at least a three-day supply of non perishable food
- Battery-powered/hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio (tone alert)
- Flashlight
- First aid kit
- Extra batteries



- Whistle to signal for help

### Additional Emergency Supplies to Consider

- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to [shelter-in-place](#)
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to [turn off utilities](#)
- Manual can opener for food
- Local maps
- Cell phone with chargers and a backup battery
- Prescription medications
- Non-prescription medications such as pain relievers, anti-diarrhea medication, or antacids
- Glasses and contact lens solution
- Infant formula, bottles, diapers, wipes
- Pet food and extra water for your pet
- Important documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records (electronic or in a waterproof container)
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket
- Change of clothing, sturdy shoes
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper to disinfect water
- Fire extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene products
- Paper cups, plates, paper towels, plastic utensils
- Books, games, puzzles, or other activities for children

*Source: Department of Homeland Security @*

<https://www.ready.gov>





Thank you to our Education Specialist, Angela Syhlman, for coordinating the activities at Tri-County's booth at the Cedar Valley STEM Festival on 3/19/24 at the UNI Dome. Thank you to all of our additional staff volunteers for the event including Dr. Welch, Dr. Smith, Jennifer Roberts, and Nicole Stubs.



## Nutrition

by Tracey Sauke, Dietitian

In March, we celebrated National Nutrition Month. Check out this [video](#) to learn more about our nutrition program and watch the Trusty Tigers make Peanut Butter Balls!

### Jags Making Peanut Butter Balls



1. Mash or blend 1 can (15 ounces) great northern beans until smooth.
2. Add 1 tablespoon vanilla extract, 1/3 cup honey and 1 1/4 cups peanut butter. Stir until blended.
3. Stir in 1 1/2 cups oatmeal.
4. Shape mixture into balls. Enjoy.



This month we will be learning about greenhouse crops. You can make your own homemade greenhouse and start seeds with your child at home. To learn more, check out: [Starting Seeds Indoors \(Spanish\)](#). When kids help grow fruits and vegetables, they are more likely to eat them and try other fruits and vegetables as well.

Fish is a great source of healthy fats that are essential for your child's developing brain, nervous system and vision. There is some research suggesting consuming fish early in life may help prevent allergic diseases such as asthma and eczema. Try a kid-friendly fish recipe like: [Tasty Fish and Veggie Packets](#) or [Tuna Melt](#). For more information visit [Children Eating Fish](#).

## EAT FISH AT LEAST 2X PER WEEK

### What seafood is best?



Salmon, trout and herring are low in mercury and high in brain boosting DHA



Shrimp  
Cod  
Catfish  
Crab  
Pollock  
Tilapia  
Trout



## ECC, Cedar Falls Schools, and Rural Partnerships

by Angie Barth, Program Manager

March sure ended with some unwanted weather! Hopefully in April we will see some showers that will bring out sunshine and colorful blooms (see the picture



on the left; children at North Cedar are growing their own sunflowers)! Another thing April is known for is tax day (don't forget to get your taxes done by the 15th). It isn't the most fun thing to always think about, but did you know that there are some other things April 15th is used to celebrate? Take a look at some of the National Days below and how you can turn it into quality learning time for your child (as well in-kind for Tri-County)!



### April 15th

- \* *National Laundry Day* - Teach your child how to fold laundry; start with something simple like towels (1:1 correspondence/fine motor) or matching socks (classification and comparison skills)
- \* *National Purple Up! Day* - Show support to all military branches and the sacrifices they make. You can draw/write a card (fine motor, writing skills and letter/print knowledge). Or you could specifically talk about the color purple and investigate mixing colors together to make the color purple (critical thinking skills).
- \* *National Titanic Remembrance Day* - Build a structure that floats on water (in the tub, a sink or in a plastic box) and find things to add to the structure that allow it to continue to float or things that will make it sink. Encourage your child to make



predictions and ask questions that make them go 'Hmmm?' (inquiry skills and physical properties).

- \* *National Take a Wild Guess Day* - The sky's the limit with this idea. One suggestion is guessing (making a prediction) if the items from the sink/float activity above will cause the boat to sink or float before placing it in the water. Another idea is to get a magnet and ask your child to guess if items around the house will stick to the magnet or not. Or, blow up a balloon and guess how many times you can hit it before it hits the floor (knowledge of physical properties, classification and inquiry skills)!

*If you do any of these activities (it doesn't have to be on the 15th), complete an in-kind and turn it into your child's teacher!*

*Check out the pictures below of children from North Cedar making/eating peanut butter balls and celebrating Dr. Seuss at Orchard Hill last month by making/eating green eggs!*

