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BrightStart Learning Center, LLC  
4920 Brennan Park Drive  
Alexandria, Virginia 22304

# Bright Start's Monthly Shine

## Director's Column

By Carin Elliott

As you might have guessed from its late arrival, December's newsletter has been done a bit different than the past few newsletters that I have completed. This month, I have communicated to you through emails the majority of the information that I needed to pass on to you. This will most likely be the process next December as well since December is an extremely busy month for the center as we prepare for the end of the tax year.

Now, it's time to say "Good-bye" to the year two thousand nine!

### End of Year Processes

To aid you in your tax preparation, I will be printing out and distributing 2009 customer statements for all charges and payments to your child's account by January 15, 2010. Please be on the lookout for your statement which will be stapled to your child's daily report. I will send out an email alert on the day that they are distributed for your added convenience.

### Electronic Communications

Subject: Outside Time & Bright Start Delayed Openings & Closings

Just a friendly reminder... Please be sure to bring in extra layers, a hat, gloves, and a warm coat for your child to wear outside as the days have grown cold and we are required by licensing to spend time outside daily as long as the weather permits and we want to make sure our children are warm enough.



Please remember to label all of your child's belongings.

In addition, in case of inclement weather, Bright Start follows the lead of Alexandria City Public Schools.

If Alexandria City Schools are closed due to inclement weather, then Bright Start is closed. If Alexandria City Schools open one or two hours late, Bright Start will open two hours late at 9:00 am.

If Alexandria Schools close early, then Bright Start will also close early. At times, Bright Start will make an independent decision to close early given our longer operating hours. We will send out an email requesting that you contact the center if we ever make a decision to close early. If we do not receive a response within a predetermined amount of time, then we will contact you to inform you of our decision to close early.

In the event a closure or delay occurs over a public school holiday (i.e. winter break), please call the center at 703-370-8414 and check the answering machine message. You can also tune to

NBC or check email for updates from the center.

Subject: Holiday Bonus (Teacher Appreciation Gifts)

It has come to my attention that there is some concern regarding the distribution of the "Holiday Bonus" to the Bright Start teachers. I would like to provide you with some additional information regarding this process so that we are all on one accord.

The "Holiday Bonus" became a Bright Start tradition in 2006. Each year, some of the parents/guardians of the children enrolled in the center give monetary gifts in whatever denomination that they feel comfortable with to demonstrate their appreciation to their child's teacher. In fact, the "red box" that is in my office right now is the same red box that has been used each year since 2006. In the past, we have had measurable parent participation and have been able to give a somewhat sizeable gift to each teacher. I know this because this information has been shared with me by the teachers themselves and by the owner, Kerri.

Last year during this time, I was out on maternity leave (Leigh was born on Dec 4th ). Therefore, I did not have knowledge about the "Holiday Bonus". I actually found out about this tradition from several of our teachers and elected to continue the tradition because it was obviously extremely meaningful for them. Our teachers really look forward to receiving this bonus.

In addition, I have been asked by a number of parents whether they should give money to the "red box" or just purchase gifts for their child's teachers or can they do both. You may elect to participate in the holiday season however you like. However, our teachers really look forward to the bonus since this has been a tradition for

a number of years here. The idea is to donate to the teachers in the box and then, management divides the total donation among the teachers so that everyone receives a "Holiday" gift and no one feels left out or underappreciated. The management team does not participate in the bonus program; the entire gift is distributed among the teachers.

In previous years, the bonuses were distributed based on a teacher's seniority (years with Bright Start), whether they were a full-time or part-time teacher, and whether they were a lead teacher. In speaking with some of our teachers and with Kerri, I have decided to change the way that the bonuses will be distributed.

If anyone recognizes how hard Bright Start's teachers work on a daily basis, I do. Therefore, this year, we will be using a different formula in order to distribute the gifts in the fairest manner possible. Consideration with regard to length of time a teacher has been employed at Bright Start will only be given to the current year (2009) meaning if a teacher was hired two-weeks ago, then he/she would not receive the same bonus as a teacher who has been employed since February. Consideration will also be given to whether the teacher is a lead teacher and whether he/she is a full-time or part-time employee.

We will be accepting donations in the main office in the "red box" until Monday, **December 21, 2009** which is an extension from our original date of Friday, December 18, 2009.

Subject: Santa Visit 12/21/09

**Santa** will be visiting Bright Start on **Monday, December 21, 2009**. You are more than welcome to stop by to snap photos of your child with Santa if you like. Santa will be visiting classrooms according to the following schedule:

Teddy Bears 2:45 pm

Busy Bees 3:00 pm (Per the Busy Bee's teachers' request, please dress your child in the color red.)

Turtle Tots 3:30 pm

Swinging Monkeys & Busy Bugs 4:00 pm

Preschool (Tigers & Kangaroos) about 4:40 pm

**Subject: REMINDERS**

Bright Start will be closed Thursday, December 24th and Friday, December 25th. We will also be closed Friday, January 1, 2010.

I will be out on vacation starting Monday, December 28th and will return on Monday, January 4th. In my absence, please forward all emails to Angel at [adungee@bright-start.org](mailto:adungee@bright-start.org).

Have a wonderful holiday season!

**Director's Awards**

November

Cynthia Collier, Site Manager

Ms. Cynthia is one of Bright Start's rays of sunshine. She is truly a remarkable individual! We are lucky to have someone so willing to work so hard on a daily basis to make sure that the "behind-the-scenes" work gets accomplished.

If you are not aware, Ms. Cynthia is in charge of planning all of our special events. She decorates, prepares the menu, and etc. As you may have figured out from our last "Holiday Luncheon" in November, she goes above and beyond to ensure that our special events are a success and that anyone who is invited to attend, whether it be solely for the teachers, children, or families, enjoy themselves.

Ms. Cynthia is an extremely valuable member of our team. She comes to

work every day with a smile on her face and a positive attitude. Many who know her would say that she is often the voice of reason as she is a role model among of staff.

Ms. Cynthia works hard during the few hours that she is at Bright Start every day. She is a part-time site manager, but based on the amount of work that she does you would never know it! ☺

## Classroom of the Month

### *Swinging Monkeys Classroom*

The Monkey's team is a dynamic team of individuals who work extremely well together. Ms. Kathy, Ms. Brenda, Ms. Gladis, Ms. Maria V., Ms. Alex, Ms. Dina, and Ms. Absalat are a force to be reckoned with. Their efforts have not only been recognized by the management team but also by numerous parents who stop to tell or email me about the spectacular things that this classroom is doing.

Ms. Kathy (Lead Teacher of the Monkeys class and August 2009 Director's Award recipient) works over her scheduled hours in the mornings on a daily basis and often in the evenings just to "finish up" something or to help out. She also serves as a mentor to Brenda who has been training to become the evening lead of the Monkey's class. Kathy is a true leader. She is compassionate and goes above and beyond the call of duty to keep all of the families and teachers of her class informed.

Kathy and Brenda lead by example; they address parent and staff concerns within their classrooms and respect their team members. If there is a concern within their classroom, they first attempt to handle it within their classroom with each other or through a team meeting and they do not hesitate to seek counsel from the office if they are unsure of something.

This team works so well together that if one of the lead teachers is out, it is not very noticeable because a plan is left for the team and the team pulls together to implement that plan to the best of their

ability. Each team member pulls from each other's strength.

Ms. Gladis brings a certain artistic flair to her team. She comes up with creative ideas and helps to keep everything in place. She actually arrives early to work each day to stock the classroom with supplies and to prepare projects for the day with Ms. Kathy.

Maria V. is great at bringing smiles to the children's faces when they need it most. She brings a sense of humor and she focuses to "get the job done".

Brenda thinks quickly on her feet. She is organized and pro-active. Brenda is great at giving the kids the extra boost of confidence that they need to accomplish tasks.

Alex and Absalat bring a youthful spirit to the Monkeys class. Their willingness to learn by doing is an excellent addition to this class.

Great work, Swinging Monkeys! ☺

## Staffing Updates

- Cecilia Pacheco, Full-Time Assistant Teacher in the Teddy Bears class, has returned from medical leave.
- Kerry Beatty, Lead Teacher in the Teddy Bears class, has returned from medical leave.
- Please join me in welcoming Nakia Thomas to our Bright Start team as a part-time floating assistant teacher. Nakia has previous experience working with children in another child care center. She has a six month old son who she adores. Welcome, Nakia! ☺

## What's New?

**BrightStart is now accepting applications for substitute teachers.**

## This Month's Events

Monday, December 21, 2009  
**Santa Visits BrightStart**

Tuesday, December 22, 2009  
**Preschool Interproductions**

**Tigers writers showcase starts at 10:00 am in the Tigers classroom .**

**Kangaroos play starts at 10:15am in the Henderson Room of the Cameron Club. Doors open at 10:00 am .**

**For more information, please contact your child's teacher@ 703-461-0457 .**

Thursday, December 24, 2009  
**BRIGHT START CLOSED**

Friday, December 25, 2009  
**BRIGHT START CLOSED**

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### **Bright Start Closures:**

Friday, January 1, 2010- Bright Start Closed for New Year's Day

Next Parent's Meeting- Feb/Mar

## Reminders

- In the best of interests of our children, staff, and our center, please be mindful not to congregate at entry doors or in walkways within the center. Please stand in your child's classroom to allow for other's to pass through safely.

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- Please be sure to let the office know immediately when your child comes down with a contagious rash, infection, or illness such as the Flu, Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis), Ringworm, Chickenpox (Varicella), or Hand, Foot, and Mouth and etcetera.
- It is your responsibility to wash your child’s hands with soap and water at arrival and departure each day.
- If you would like for your child to eat breakfast at the center, your child must be at school by 9:00 a.m.
- If you would like for your child to eat lunch at the center, your child must be at school or have called us to let us know that he/she will be coming to school for lunch by 11:00 a.m.

Please note: If your child misses the center’s feeding times, please make sure

they are fed prior to their drop off or if you would like you are more than welcome to sit with your child while they eat. We are not staffed to supervise one child and continue with the day to day routines with the rest of the class. Thank you in advance for your understanding. ☺

- The police will ticket you if you double park outside because it serves as a hazard to cars that have to squeeze through and more importantly, to children and their families crossing the street.
- Any tuition that is paid after the due date is subject to a \$25 late fee.
- Bright Start is not licensed to have children in our building prior to 7:00 a.m. Our staff begins to arrive at 6:45 a.m. to prepare for the day, but they do not accept children before 7:00 a.m.
- The center closes at 6:30 p.m.. There is a \$15 late charge for any

children not picked up on time. An additional \$15 is charged after 6:45 p.m. \*\*\*For the Dancing Ducks (Half Day) class, the late fee is charged after 12:30 p.m. and an additional \$15 is charge after 12:45 p.m.

Please help us maintain our licensing requirements by remembering to do the following:

- Label your child’s personal belongings and any sunscreen or diaper cream with their name prior to bringing them to school.
- Label your child’s food and drink with their name and the date.
- Please do not place any food, drinks, medications, diaper cream, sunscreen, or ointments in your child’s diaper bags, cubbies, or totes. Please forward these items directly to your child’s teacher.

**Bright Start Contacts**  
 Kerri Chase, Owner & Center  
 Administrator  
[owner@bright-start.org](mailto:owner@bright-start.org)

Carin Elliott, Director  
[celliot@bright-start.org](mailto:celliot@bright-start.org)

Angel Dungee, Associate Director  
[adungee@bright-start.org](mailto:adungee@bright-start.org)

Check out our website.  
[www.bright-start.org](http://www.bright-start.org)

# December 2009

\*\*\*Please Note: Staff leave subject to change.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Associate Director on Vacation	2 Associate Director on Vacation	3 Associate Director on Vacation	4 Associate Director on Vacation	5
6	7	8	9	10	11 Maria P. Leave Early @ 1:30pm	12
13	14 Shanice Out	15 Shanice Out	16 Melkam Leave Early @ 1:30pm	17	18	19
20	21 Santa Visit Isa Out	22 Cynthia Out - PM	23 Juana Leave Early @ 1pm	24 Bright Start Closed	25 Bright Start Closed	26
27	28 Director on Vacation  Kerstin Out Cynthia Out Luwam Out Juana Out	29 Director on Vacation  Kerstin Out Cynthia Out Juana Out	30 Director on Vacation  Kerstin Out Aysha Out Juana Out	31 Director on Vacation  Kerstin Out Aysha Out Nicky Out Juana Out	1 Happy New Year!  Bright Start Closed	

## Staff Birthdays and Anniversaries

### BIRTHDAYS

Dina Hammoude            December 12

### ANNIVERSARIES

Melkam Tesfaye            December 7    (1 yr)

Isaura Garcia              December 8    (90 days)

Luwam Hailemariam        December 28   (90 days)

### Additional Anniversaries from November:

Juana Rodriguez            November 7    (4 yrs)

Megan Lee                  November 17   (2 yrs 5mo)

Cynthia Collier             November 28   (4 yrs)

Cecilia Pacheco            November 27   (3 yrs)