

Parenting Communities of Leelanau County

March 2010

PARENTING COMMUNITIES SEEKS TO PROMOTE HEALTHY CHILDREN LIVING IN STABLE, NURTURING FAMILIES,
SUPPORTED BY STRONG COMMUNITIES THAT PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE, SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

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I am delighted to be focusing on relationships this month, as the data and our collective wisdom teaches us that relationships help us weather the hard times. And for many of us, March is a hard time: is it winter? spring? are those bulbs peeking up through the snow? should I put the snowpants away? can I plant peas? So, let's turn our focus from environmental confusion to the amazing power of relationships.

Let's define relationships, at least for this article, as the act of an authentic connection with another. Can you believe that relationships impact our physical, mental and spiritual health? They literally change our brains and bodies and shape the way we see and respond to the world.

Remembering concepts Dr. Becky Bailey shares on how our brain develops, let's think about how our brain is uniquely designed to be responsive to relationships. The development of our brain in the first years of life is determined by the quality of the relationships we experience. Babies who are fed, housed, and clean but lack caring loving human touch by being held and cooed to and listened to, fail to thrive and often die at high rate. Our need for connection to others is a life long human requirement. Elders who live alone are more likely to experience poor health than those who live among satisfying relationships. Research shows how human relationships contribute to healthy living.

How do we support our children in developing the habit and skills of connecting with others? Perhaps we'd best start with ourselves. As you well know, children drink in our lives- they watch, listen, intuit your every move; they are students in training and are primed to turn to you as their ultimate teacher. Take a look at your own beliefs and behaviors about relationships. Whom do you turn to in your mind when you feel lost or anxious? Do you turn to those same people in practice? To whom do

you reach a hand? Why do you make that choice? What feelings do you notice when you are with the various people who populate your life? Do those feelings seep out through your behavior? How does that feel? Do you structure any social/friend/romance time into your life? Do you allow people to support you? How do you wish your relationships looked and felt? What are you doing to nudge the real relationships in your life toward your dreams? Big questions eh? I think the questions are really more important than the answers, and certainly we all know that there is no instruction manual for how to relate.

Knowing that the act of connecting with others is likely to be unfinished business for most of us, are there are things we can do to help our children develop skills we may not be able to consistently demonstrate to them? Yes. Some children take to social interactions easily while many others seem to have to learn social skills just as some have to learn to ride a bike, while others leap aboard and off they go.

The first gift we can give our children is the opportunity to develop relationships, by exposure to all kinds of people- children, adults, people like us and who are different. Show that you value the act of connecting with others and give them the chance to practice skills of relationship work. Giving children a variety of people with whom to connect allows them to learn how different relationships may require different tempos, languages, energies AND allows them to recognize the kinds of people who fit best, who feel easiest, more challenging, more interesting, etc.

The next gift is the gift of developmentally appropriate expectations. We so often expect more of our children than their experience has taught them. Parents are often concerned that their toddler/young preschooler is not talking about friends, or doesn't really play with others.

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MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURS	FRIDAY	SAT
<p>1</p> <p>FOOD PANTRY: • 1-3p SB Congregational Church • 5-7p St. Gertrude's Church Northport</p> <hr/> <p>Baby Pantry 5-7 pm Suttons Bay Immanuel Lutheran Church Annex</p>	<p>2</p> <p>WIC & IMMS Call for appt: 256-0200</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Laundry Project 9 am - 11:45 am Suttons Bay Laundromat</p> <hr/> <p>Glen Lake Playgroup 10 -11:30 am Glen Arbor Township Hall</p> <hr/> <p>Library/Story Time 10:30a-11:30a Leland Township Library</p> <hr/> <p>Food Pantry 1-3p Suttons Bay Congregational Church</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Wiggler's Story Hour 11 am – noon Leelanau Twp Library</p> <hr/> <p>FOOD PANTRY 5:00 - 6:30 pm Glen Lake Community Reform Church</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Music Time 10 – 11 am Leland School Room 140</p>	
<p>8</p> <p>FOOD PANTRY: • 1-3p SB Congregational Church • 5-7p St. Gertrude's, Northport</p> <hr/> <p>Baby Pantry 1-3 pm Suttons Bay Immanuel Lutheran Church Annex</p> <hr/> <p>WIC - call for appointment 256-0200</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Glen Lake Playgroup 10 -11:30 am Glen Arbor Township Hall</p> <hr/> <p>Library/Story Time 10:30a-11:30a Leland Township Library</p> <hr/> <p>Food Pantry 1-3p Suttons Bay Congregational Church</p> <hr/> <p>Parents Together • 6 – 8 pm Leelanau Children's Center, Leland Dinner & childcare provided.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Wiggler's Story Hour 11 am – noon Leelanau Twp Library</p> <hr/> <p>FOOD PANTRY 5:00 - 6:30 pm Glen Lake Community Reform Church</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Paint & Playdough 10 – 11 am Leland School Room 140</p> <hr/> <p>Bilingual Playgroup 5:30 – 6:30 pm Leelanau Children's Center, Leland</p>	
<p>15</p> <p>Young Families Playgroup 5 – 7 pm Suttons Bay - Immanuel Lutheran Church – For parents aged teen thru 23.</p> <hr/> <p>Baby Pantry 5-7 pm Suttons Bay Immanuel Lutheran Annex</p> <hr/> <p>FOOD PANTRY: • 1-3p SB Congregational • 5-7p St. Gertrude's, Northport</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Laundry Project 9 am – 11:45 am Suttons Bay Laundromat</p> <hr/> <p>Glen Lake Playgroup 10 – 11:30 am Glen Lake Community Reform Church</p> <hr/> <p>Library/Story Time 10:30a-11:30a Leland Township Library</p> <hr/> <p>Food Pantry 1-3p SB Congregational</p> <hr/> <p>WIC & IMMS Call for appt: 256-0200</p>	<p>18</p> <p>KINDERGYM • 9:30 (42 mos- 4 yrs) • 10:30 (newborn – 26 mos) • 11:30 (26– 42 mos)</p> <hr/> <p>Wiggler's Story Hour 11 am – noon Leelanau Twp Library</p> <hr/> <p>FOOD PANTRY 5:00 - 6:30 pm Glen Lake Community Reform Church</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Creative Movement 10 – 11 am Leland Public School Room 140</p>	<p>20th FREE Northern Michigan Parent Leadership Conference <i>(details on page 3)</i> 10 am – 2 pm Traverse Bay Area ISD Conference Center 1101 Red Drive, Traverse City</p>
<p>22</p> <p>Baby Pantry 1-3 pm Suttons Bay Immanuel Lutheran Church Annex</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24 WIC • call for appt. 256-0200</p> <hr/> <p>Glen Lake Playgroup 10 -11:30 am Glen Lake Community Reform Church</p> <hr/> <p>Library/Story Time 10:30a-11:30a Leland Township Library</p> <hr/> <p>Food Pantry 1-3p SB Congregational</p>	<p>25 KINDERGYM • 9:30 (42 mos- 4 yrs) • 10:30 (newborn – 26 mos) • 11:30 (26– 42 mos)</p> <hr/> <p>Wiggler's 11 am – noon Leelanau Twp Library</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Puppet & Story Time 10 – 11 am Leland Public School Room Elementary Library</p>	<p>27</p>
<p>29</p> <p>WIC & IMMS Call for appt: 256-0200</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p>	<p>March 29 – April 5 SPRING BREAK Parenting Communities Activities Resume on Tuesday, April 6th</p>		



Relationships (continued from page 1)

Developmental theory tells us that social skill development proceeds from independent play, to parallel play (playing beside but not really with), to cooperative play (playing with others), to collaborative play (full on engagement in developing play scenarios)—this journey occupies the entire preschool period for many children.

The last gift is the act of intervention. When social engagements are not going well for your child, step back to observe what is going on and consider how to help your child learn or practice a different strategy. We adults often feel an urge to snatch our children away from tough situations, wanting to protect them from pain. The role of parent offers us the chance to recognize that our sturdy little children want to be successful and need experience and assistance more than they need

isolation from the bumps of life. Maybe before the next play date, you might have a conversation with your child about which toys would be a good idea to bring into the living room to play with and which s/he prefers to put away, off limits. Or maybe it would be helpful to play out some scenarios— *last time she came over, you both ended up in tears when the cat sat on her lap, how do you want to handle that if it happens today?*

If you have questions about the gifts I have described, please feel free to discuss them with our Parenting Communities staff. And I hope that this month, you'll spare some time to contemplate the nourishment of relationships in your own life. As always, let us know what you think, how you feel and how we can help!

Next month, we'll explore the notion of "self talk".

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Northport: for more information on Parenting Communities in Northport, call Jen Amin (386-5144) jen@leelanauchildrenscenter.org

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