



Camp Chaia Newsletter

“Magical Moments”

Dear Families and Counselors,

Social

* The heartwarming experience of seeing such tender hearts expand in confidence and manifest in their willingness to adventure out of their comfort zone both physically and socially was truly touching.

* I felt so proud to see my staff take on the honor and trust that the parents allowed them to help their children, many for the first time, branch out on their own, and help their independence and confidence blossom. To see the children go from crying and clinging to waving their parents or caregivers off was just truly lovely.

* The other children who were accompanied by an adult also made strides in participating with gusto in new music, art and outdoor activities.

* To hear Archer's nanny say, "I have never seen him have so much fun!" and to hear Ellie chatter on about princesses, mermaids, dolphins and penguins, in her word "quenguins" was utterly charming.

* So equally touching was to witness Shauriya begin to interact verbally, and then socially, with the

other children by the end of his two weeks, as if a light went on that showed him they were part of his world and he became interested in them. From little steps like doing patterns with Cheerios and then to extending the game to learning the other's names, Shauriya shared in the activity and all enjoyed eating the cheerios as a reward. Not to mention how all bonded beautifully with the teens and teachers.

Music

* Ryan showed leadership and was especially helpful to the younger ones. He, as well as, Zoe and Ben got seriously into drumming with Teacher Craig and I.

Science

* There were a lot of opportunities to try new textures (cornstarch was not for everybody!) though most enjoyed it!

* It was fun to see Ellie and friends extend the bouncing sugar activity to see what else could bounce on a taut surface.

Art

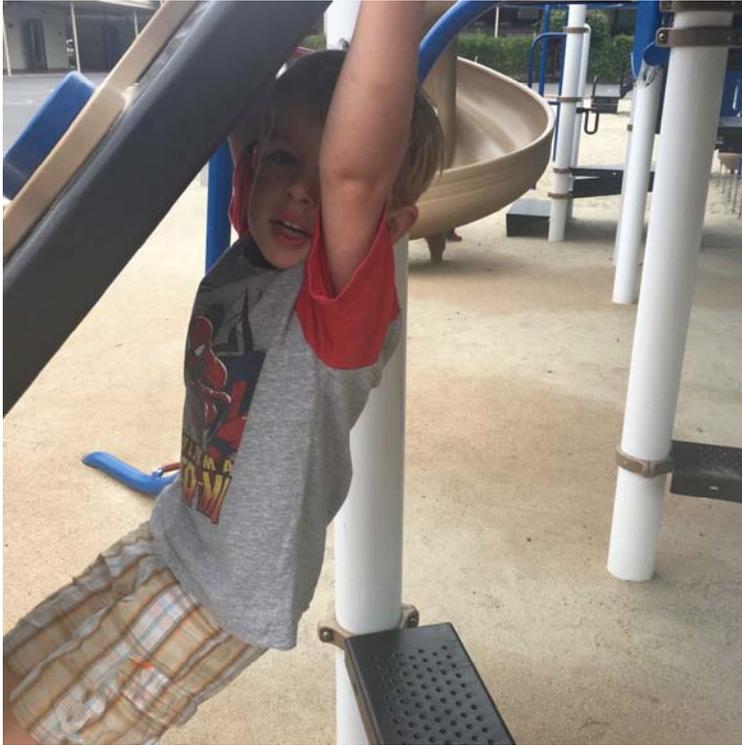
* We covered colors and shapes using rainbows in song, in art play, in movement and in shape recognition so I am hoping that will have met each in his or her own learning style.

* I enjoyed seeing YJ start to use scissors and watching the triplets really work with chalk. The others explored depth of color by either layering more or using the water we provided to bring out the darker shades.



Physical Skills

* I saw so many children learn to negotiate the challenges of the play structure and master sliding down the fireman's pole hand under hand with teacher Kelly's and others' guidance.



animals. It was a magical place. The children were not only able to partake in the smells and tastes of the veggies, herbs, and fruit, but get to touch the soft amaranth and sharper fruits and flowers. They all helped water, see the variety of shades of green and even blue leaves, and roam freely and safely to explore what interested them.



Garden

* The garden, and particularly its apple trees, inspired sharing a story about a star in the middle of each apple, and what purposes the tree serves for the birds and



Snack

* Snack time was peaceful and fun. Seeing the kids knock down the foam squares before and after snack and even climb into them was pure delight. I honor the

assiduousness and the creativity of the teens as they fabricated activities that were "out of the box."

* By the end, all the kids were in the room for music, if not in the circle, being sacred witness to real drum circles on real, resonant African drums. We are very grateful to Teacher Craig of Heffalump pre-school, an accomplished Reggae musician in his own right, for sharing his talent and enthusiasm with us.



Summary of Skill Development

* To see all the active boys, in particular, sit down to paint was just a gift of what a gentle push can result in and offer as a reward. In the case it was the longer attention span for a fine motor activity after all the large motor activity was met.

* I saw pride in the children's controlling their impulses to cry or grab transform into confidence. I saw friendships in a two year old's "parallel play way" emerge between unlikely counterparts like Keanen and Ben. So precious.



* I saw teens become the new best friends of the children and bring out language and playfulness, creativity and full emotional engagement as they so warmly offered support.



* I saw children heed our rules of not sliding down the pole without a bigger person present or come back from running away as a test of courage when Kelly spoke loudly and firmly but gave them just enough space to explore a larger territory and test their independence.

* I heard delicious giggles from the triplets as we repeated their "uh oh" game over and over until it released a trust and confidence that led to bonding outside their known social network of their wonderful family.

* I saw boys explore role play with the costumes and become their heroes for a moment in time. The response to many of the books we read them was also encouraging; seeing the teens the first week animatedly recount the toddler rhymes will never be forgotten, at least by me.

* Watching the littlest ones start to learn to balance on one foot and jump and hop is always a real achievement marker for me. Also seeing all the kids improve in making transitions is inspiring and we can know we contributed to their future classroom readiness skills.

* Being in an outdoor classroom again reinforced to me how children grow so much and so quickly when confronted by naturally occurring physical challenges. For example how the birdsong and fresh grass and breeze will translate into a comfort and peace when they revisit the outdoor experiences later on and sweet, latent memories are revisited.

* If you have never had the chance to read Rachel Carson's "A Sense of Wonder" I encourage you to do so.

It is one of my most sacred friendships with a book-friend

We are grateful to PACCC for allowing us to use their space. And grateful to Craig Ward and staff for sharing their classroom. Kelly and I are so grateful to the teens for contributing the best they had in them to make the experience so joyful and smooth.

Thank you parents for allowing us the privilege of working with your little treasures and for the memories of their giggles and smiles.

As my daughter Ami teasingly chided me: "Thanks Mom, for 'hooking' me on playing with children. Now I truly see why you love working with them and just being around them." I couldn't have felt more pleased to open up this magical, rewarding world to her.

Be well! I hope to have continued contact with all in the future.

Sincerely,
Chaia

...And Kelly, Ami, Cole, Tate, Lulu, Anne, David, Emma, Roni, Shir, and Nour

