Hello Parents, Caregivers, and Families of Wonderland!
Welcome to our second seasonal Newsletter, where we'll highlight important news about our school, including what our kids are learning in the classroom, upcoming events, and our school's success stories.

You may have noticed new faces at drop-off! We are excited to welcome many new families and teachers as our Wonderland community grows! The school is close to reaching full capacity as the Board of Directors and leadership staff usher in a future of financial sustainability. Early childhood education is not a particularly lucrative model; in fact, many in the field view it as a public service rather than a money-making enterprise. The tuition each of us pays does not collectively cover the costs of doing business, like paying for staff wages, licensing fees, rent, insurance, and educational supplies. We are often able to offset these costs through grant writing or donations. In fact, we were recently awarded a $17,000 grant from the City of Gunnison, and the Board is planning a spring fundraiser. Public policy changes, like Universal Pre-K, will also make a great impact for the families we serve. As Board President, I want to provide a brief overview of early childhood funding because I believe transparency plays an important part in building a Wonderland community that is informed, engaged, and devoted to the future of our incredible school.

Thank you for the flexibility and compassion you showed while our school had to close for a few days because of staff illness. Our teachers are our greatest asset and we need to take care of them so they can take care of ours.

I look forward to seeing you at our next school event- Family Fun Day- on March 4th (details below). And, if you ever have questions or concerns for the Board, feel free to contact me: jessicaeckhardt@hotmail.com.

Best, Jessica Eckhardt, Board President
This spring, our Infant & Toddler Playgrounds are being remodeled! The OLE, while fostering a positive social environment, will also encourage creativity through open-ended play, allowing children to have safe and interactive access to nature. The Toddler side will be accessible to those with physical and emotional disabilities and inclusive to our elderly residents adjacent. All features are made from natural materials and both playgrounds include child-sized “forests”. Nature play and outdoor learning promote place-based, experiential and hands-on learning experiences. Spending time in an outdoor learning environment allows children to take risks, interact socially and independently with nature and make new discoveries.

Features include:

- Hill Slide
- Climbing Features
- Forest
- Collaborative Musical Fence
- Water Features
- Sand Box
- Loose Parts
- Stage w/ Mirrors and Chalkboard
- Shade
- Wacky Posts (for fort building and swings)

CURRICULUM CORNER
The Importance of Play-Based Learning and Nature Play
TEACHER AND STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Each newsletter we will spotlight one of Wonderland's many amazing teachers or staff members. This edition we are featuring...

Julia Marcuzza

Celebrating her one year anniversary, Julia Marcuzzo is our superstar infant and toddler supervisor. She is primarily in the infant room with the babies, so you may not have had a chance to meet her yet. She has a one year old son, Dakota, who she gets to be with every day in the infant room, which she is so grateful for. She loves being able to provide quality, unique care to all of the babies and she brings a sense of humor and lightness to her role. In her role as infant and toddler supervisor she will be supporting all of the staff in those rooms and is looking forward to meeting all of the toddler parents soon. Julia has lived in Gunnison for 1.5 years and she had her son here. She loves the Gunnison community and her friends, who she says have been so supportive of her. She loves being at the river in the summer, takes hikes all year long, and to fully embrace the Gunnison lifestyle, wants to learn how to ice fish. We are so lucky to have Julia leading our infant and toddler rooms and proving such amazing care for the babies and toddlers!
We also want to welcome new staff members to our school!

Molly Mugglestone has come on staff as our Administrative Director. She is a former board member and worked to open our new school in 2021 after transitioning Wonderland from its original school, Seasons Schoolhouse.

Matthew Keegan joined Wonderland in December and works primarily with the Pines kids. Matt is a former attorney, teacher and college administrator and he brings a deep knowledge of child development and experiential education to his work with the kids.

Sandra Day also joined Wonderland in December. She is in the infant room and is amazing with the babies! She previously worked at the GVH Senior Center and we are lucky to have her calming presence at the school.

Grace Gibson is a Western student in Outdoor Recreation and is a Gunnison native. She will be working throughout our classrooms and will use her Spanish language skills with the kids.

Maricel Epps comes to us from the GVH Senior Center where she provided housekeeping and kitchen services for the seniors. She will be working in our infant and toddler rooms and has jumped right in.
We are excited to help our families with four-year-olds sign up for Colorado’s Universal Pre-K program! This statewide program is a result of voter-passed initiatives to support families with preschool assistance. All kids who will be four years old by August 1, 2023 are eligible. Wonderland is participating which means PAID TUITION for four-year-olds starting in August.

Here are the details:

1. All children the year before Kindergarten are eligible for PAID TUITION for 15 hours of preschool a week starting August 2023.

2. Qualifying students will receive 30 hours of PAID TUITION a week. Qualifying factors: Household Income, IEP, housing status, dual language learner, foster/kinship care.

If you missed our sign up event at the school and would like to enroll you can visit https://upk.colorado.gov/. To enroll (scroll to the bottom of the page and “submit an application”. When you are applying, be sure to choose Wonderland Nature School.

Parents of three-year-olds- the state of Colorado is considering whether or not to include three-year-olds in the Universal Pre-K program for this year. Click here to let the state know it’s critical to add three-year-olds to the program now!

Sandibel and the Cottonwoods Classroom
UPCOMING EVENTS

**February 15th at 3:30 pm**: Creede Repertory Theater is coming to the school for a performance of *Ms. Joy* for the kids!

*Ms. Joy* - Running approximately 25 minutes  
Devised by Brittni Shambaugh Addison  
Directed by Jenni Harbour

Info about this performance is available at the school.

*Ms. Joy* isn't particularly joyful. She has a set routine that she sticks to every day. There is a time and place for everything. Until, one day, she receives a surprise visit from an expected canine friend, and he turns her routine upside down.

*Ms. Joy* is a story for our youngest learners (ages 5 and under), told through clowning, puppetry, and sound. It teaches students the power of play, friendship, and laughter!

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**Family Fun Day**

We welcome all Wonderland families to join us for a morning of fun and community!

**Saturday, March 4**  
10:00am - 12:00pm  
Gunnison Rec. Center

We've reserved the mat & party room.  
Feel free to bring snacks to share.
SUPPORTING THE SCHOOL

As parents we often want to help but get so busy! One of the goals of the Board is to create easy ways for you to support the school, at any level you can. Thanks to all of the parents that donated to the Holiday Gift Baskets!

**City Market Rewards:** One very easy way to support Wonderland is to choose the school for your City Market Rewards. We have partnered with The Kroger Co. Family of Stores (City Market/King Soopers) in their Community Rewards program and we’d appreciate your participation as we earn $1000s of dollars per year from this community support. It is very easy to sign up!

1. Start Here https://www.citymarket.com/
2. Click on Sign In (or create an account)
3. Then click My Account
4. Then Community Rewards
5. Search for “Wonderland Nature School” and choose us as your rewards recipient!

You can also use their App:
1. Click on the three lines in the upper right corner
2. Choose Rewards, then Community Rewards
3. Search for “Wonderland Nature School” and choose us as your rewards recipient!

**Donating your tax refund to the school:** by Colorado law individuals receiving a state tax refund can donate that to a charity. To donate your tax refund to Wonderland Nature School! Enter this number 20143018111 on the Voluntary Contributions Schedule (DR 0104CH) of your Colorado Individual Income Tax Return.

Thank you!
ANNUAL CLOSURES 2023
We strive to support our families, community, and importantly, our staff in creating work life balance. And we also recognize that working parents need support. As such, we have scheduled annual closures that give our staff and our kids a break.

- Spring Break: Follows Gunnison school's schedule March 13-17, 2023
- Memorial Day, Monday May 29, 2023
- Summer Break: Week of 4th of July- July 3-7, 2023
- Monday, October 9, 2023
- Thanksgiving Break: Wednesday and Thursday of Thanksgiving Week
- Winter Break: Follows Gunnison school’s schedule- dates to come from GWSD calendar

ODDS AND ENDS!

- Our classes are reaching capacity which is great! We ask that as current families, if you would like to add days or change your schedule in any way, that you email Molly at admin@wonderlandnatureschool.org to ensure you have the schedule you would like.
- Please watch out for the posts in the parking lot when backing out. We will repair those that are broken in the Spring.
- Pack extra snacks for your kids- they are busy and hungry!

IN MEMORIUM

In November 2022 the Gunnison area and early childhood community lost a truly magical soul. Nancy Pierce passed away in her new chosen home for retirement in the San Juan Islands, WA. Nancy opened our founding school, Seasons Schoolhouse in 2007. She had an amazing spirit and passion for helping children feel loved, wanted and heard. Our school would not be here if it weren’t for Nancy’s vision for Seasons- to provide quality, nature-based, social- emotional care for the littlest members of our community. She will be truly missed. We love you Nancy!