

Parent Handbook Nature Kids Preschool 2016-2017



Ladybugs

4 year olds
9:00 am - Noon
Mon/Wed/Fri



Owls

4 year olds
1:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Mon/Wed/Fri



Tualatin Hills Nature Center

15655 SW Millikan Way
Beaverton, OR 97003
(503) 629-6350 x 2523
anahill@thprd.org

PHILOSOPHY

Nature Kids is a nature-based preschool program where children discover nature through the use of their five senses. We strive to connect children to the nature in our park and to the nature in their own neighborhood. We explore the parts of nature that are fully hands-on, to provide a direct experience that children can smell and touch and see. Our goal is to inspire a sense of place and a connection to the natural world that they can carry with them.

In our program, we use The Creative Curriculum® as a guide that encourages children to create, explore, learn, play, express ideas, and problem solve. This curriculum helps children grow in a positive and supportive environment. We focus on the whole child, promoting growth in social-emotional, physical, language and literacy, and cognitive development.

We ensure that children have a positive, safe and secure place to develop. We value the involvement and support of our families and strive to build a sense of community with our families. Friendships blossom as children share their discoveries with one another. Nature-themed activities, which follow the changing seasons, allow children to learn through play as they prepare for Kindergarten.

STAFF

The preschool staff is experienced in early childhood and nature education. The Nature Kids' staff consists of a director, an instructor, possible intern, and other volunteers.

Alexandra Nahill

Preschool Director, teaching Ladybugs

For the past 17 years, Alexandra has been teaching children ages 3 to 12 years old on a variety of subjects including environmental education, science, physical education, Spanish, and yoga. For the past seven years, she has been teaching environmental education to preschoolers at Tualatin Hills Nature Center as well as at elementary schools in Beaverton for three years. In addition, she has developed curriculum for sea turtle conservation programs in Costa Rica and Columbia. Alexandra has a dual degree in Physical Education and Biology from the University of Antioquia in Medellin, Columbia and is currently working on her Master's degree in Early Childhood Education and Family Studies. Alexandra loves hiking, running, swimming, scuba diving and all things in the water.

Leah Duncan

Preschool Instructor, teaching Ladybugs and Owls

Leah graduated from the University of Oregon with a degree in Sociology with a concentration in Environment, Population and Society. She has been teaching with the Tualatin Hills Nature Center since 2010 in a variety of programs including Nature Kids Preschool, Nature Mobile and Camp Wild Things. Leah loves camping, music, and anything that involves being creative.

Shelby Collins

Preschool Instructor, teaching Owls and Chipmunks

Shelby started working at the Tualatin Hills Nature Center when she was a student at Western Oregon University in 2004. She graduated with a degree in Earth Science and Environmental Studies. Over the past nine years; Shelby has worked with all ages of children in camps, afterschool programs, preschool, group programs and events. Shelby loves reading kids' books, trail running, and spoiling her rabbit, Puff.

REGISTRATION

The full program deposit of one month's tuition and *Deposit Acknowledgement* form must be received by the Tualatin Hills Nature Center in order to confirm your child's registration and hold their space in the 2016-17 Nature Kids program.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

The non-refundable deposit of one month's tuition is due to hold your child's place in the program. If your child remains enrolled in Nature Kids, the entire amount of your deposit will pay your May 2017 tuition. Early withdrawal will result in forfeiture of your full deposit. If you withdraw from preschool, your tuition will not be applied to any other tuition payments or any other THPRD programs.

Prices listed are for in-district patrons. Families who live outside of the THPRD district boundaries will need to pay a quarterly assessment fee. The 2016 assessment fee is currently \$80 per quarter. The assessment fee allows all household members to receive in-district rates on all THPRD classes, drop-in activities, fitness passes and other programs for that quarter. For a full year of Nature Kids preschool, there will be three quarterly assessments needed.

Payments for Nature Kids are due on the fifteenth of each month, one month in advance. September tuition is due August 15. A late fee of \$5 will be charged if your monthly tuition payment is made after the due date, the 15th of the prior month.

Payments can be made directly at the Tualatin Hills Nature Center front desk in person or by phone. We accept Visa, Master Card, Discover, THPRD Gift Cards, Cash and Personal Checks. At this time we do not have an automatic deduction system for monthly payments.

WELCOME PACKET

In August you will be mailed a Welcome and Registration Packet with required forms for you to review and fill out. These forms must be completed and returned to the Tualatin Hills Nature Center by Tuesday, September 6, 2016.

SCHEDULE

Please closely observe the starting and dismissal times for your child's class. The teachers use the time before class to prepare for the day's activities. Your on-time arrival helps keep

continuity and order in the classroom. The teachers will begin class promptly, so please move conversations with other parents and other children outside the classroom at this time. Please pick up your child immediately after class, as our instructors have other classes to prepare for. You will be charged a late fee of \$1.00 per minute if you are later than 10 minutes.

CHECK-IN/CHECK-OUT

For the Nature Kids program, please escort your child to and from class. The person(s) dropping off and picking up the child must sign in and out with the instructors. For safety reasons, we ask parents or other adults, listed by parents as approved to pick up the child, to show a photo ID at pick-up, in order to verify with whom we are sending your child home. The names of approved pick up adults must be written on the Check-In Sheet or be provided in writing to instructors in advance.

If you are not volunteering in the classroom, please do not stay in class more than 15 minutes, with the exception of days when parents are invited to participate or observe (e.g. birthdays).

HOLIDAYS OBSERVED

We follow a schedule similar to the Beaverton School District; however we do not take off all teacher in-service days. The following days Nature Kids Preschool will not be in session:

October 14, 2016	Oregon Teacher In-service Day (Friday)*
November 11, 2016	Veterans Day (Wednesday)
November 24-25, 2016	Thanksgiving
December 19, 2016–January 2, 2017	Winter Break*
January 16, 2017	Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Monday)
February 20, 2017	Presidents' Day (Monday)
March 27-31, 2017	Spring Vacation*

**Schedule dependent on the Beaverton School District Calendar.*

LADYBUGS AND OWLS PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Nature Kids Ladybugs and Owls are preschool programs for children that are planning to enter Kindergarten in the next school year. The participants in this program must be 4 years old (born before September 1, 2012). The program runs September through May.

Ages: 4 years old as of September 1, 2016

Meeting Location: Robin's Nest classroom, Tualatin Hills Nature Center

Meeting Days: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays

Meeting Times: 9:00 a.m. – noon or 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Class Size: 14 children with 2 teachers

Monthly Tuition for Ladybug and Owls: \$234

CLASS ACTIVITIES

The classroom environment, set up to facilitate learning through hands-on discovery, uses a blend of lessons and activities in social skills, creative arts, literature, math, community awareness, science, music, physical development, problem-solving, and appreciation of others. We pride ourselves on our intimate classroom size of 14 children with 2 teachers.

Our class routine:

Ladybugs: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to noon	
9:00	Open Play
9:30	Calendar, sharing and gathering
9:45	Learning Centers
10:20	Snack and story time
10:50	Nature and outdoor activity
12:00	Home

Owls: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.	
1:00	Open Play
1:30	Calendar, sharing and gathering
1:45	Learning Centers
2:20	Snack and story time
2:50	Nature and outdoor activity
4:00	Home

LADYBUGS AND OWLS: SHARING DAY

Your child will have the opportunity to share a study theme item weekly with the class. This activity helps build self-confidence. You will be notified in advance of your child's Sharing Day.

DATES TO REMEMBER

September 19, 2016 First Day of Class (Monday)

May 26, 2017 Final Day of Class (Friday)

LADYBUGS AND OWLS FIELD TRIPS

Two field trips per year are planned for the Nature Kids Ladybugs and Owls. They will be scheduled during normal class time, and you will receive prior notice about trip details from the teachers. Parents will be asked to bring their child to the designated field trip location, where the entire class will meet. Field trip destinations will include nearby parks or natural areas to expand exploration of local natural resources. If your child is not coming on a field trip, please inform the teacher prior to class time.

PARENT AND TEACHER CHECK-INS

Parent-Teacher check-ins are offered twice a year for Nature Kid parents. These conferences are offered to keep you informed about what is happening in the program and how your child is progressing. It also gives the teachers an opportunity to discuss what their expectations are for the parents and for the parents to be able to ask any questions.

THINGS TO BRING/WEAR TO NATURE KIDS

Preschool is messy, so please dress your child in clothes that can get dirty. Also, make sure that your child has appropriate clothing for art projects, active play, and weather variations. Dressing your child with different layers work very well. **Please label all removable clothing and belongings with your child's name.**

Please bring these items for your child every day to Nature Kids.

- We go outside every day, rain or shine. Always come dressed for the weather (bring rubber boots, rain coat, etc. as needed). Long pants are better than shorts for protection from itchy plants. Mittens and hats are required for winter.
- **Wear closed toed shoes** like sneakers or hiking boots - NO sandals, crocs, or flip-flops.
- Small bottle of water.
- Hearty nut free snack.
- Small backpack or lunch box that can carry all of the above.

SNACKS

Children will need to bring a hearty snack every day. If you would like to bring a treat to share with the entire class to celebrate a birthday or some other special event, please prearrange this with the teachers. Allergy concerns and healthy eating will be addressed.

- The best snack choices are low in sugar, simple to open, and consumable in 10 minutes or less.
- **We are a nut-free classroom, so please avoid bringing products that contain peanuts and tree nuts.**
- Water and natural juice drinks are recommended rather than soda pop.
- No sharing snack items to promote respect for allergies. In some cases if a child has severe allergies we will ask that certain food items be saved for home.
- We encourage low waste snacks packed in recyclable or reusable containers.

THINGS NOT TO BRING

- Toys and video games (Teacher can acknowledge a favorite toy if necessary, but it will be kept in backpack during class.)
- Pets, candy, gum
- Umbrellas
- Anything that you would rather not run the risk of getting dirty, broken, or lost.
- We share diversity of cultures, but not printed religious materials.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

Safety is our number one priority. By creating a safe environment, we feel all students are able to learn and enjoy the program. Our behavioral management techniques include positive reinforcement and guidance. We stress respect for others, following directions, and problem-solving.

Not only are we learning about nature and what lives in it, we are also learning about ourselves, each other, and how to function as a class *together*. We nurture the young child

social behaviors listed below and hope for support from you at home, to ensure your child knows what these behaviors are.

1) We follow directions

Your child must be able to follow directions in and out of the classroom.

2) We stay together.

Children must always be with a teacher and may not leave the room on their own. On our daily walk, one teacher is always in the front of the group, while another teacher is in the rear. This keeps children from getting separated from the group or going off the trail. Staying on trails keeps kids safe and prevents them from touching some of the itchy plants that grow in the forest (poison oak and stinging nettle).

3) We listen to the teacher and each other.

When the teacher talks, children should stop, look at the teacher, and listen. If this is your child's first time in a classroom situation, they may not know this yet. We will provide a nature clue for them to stop talking and listen. It is also important that children listen to each other during sharing and other activities.

4) We use friendly words and actions.

We love to hear words like "please", "thank you", "you can play too", "hello", and "can I help?" We strive to make the classroom a friendly place. When a child has something to say we encourage them to raise their hand and wait to be called on.

CONSEQUENCES

We try hard to help children understand positive and acceptable behaviors. When children do not follow the rules, we often ask them to practice doing things the right way. For example, if a child runs ahead of the group, we talk about staying with the group or holding on to an instructor's hand. If children don't respond to gentle suggestions, and depending on the severity of the problem, we go through the following steps:

1. Have the child hold a teacher's hand or sit out of an activity until they are ready to rejoin the group. If a child's behavior is out of control or becomes disruptive, the teachers will help redirect his/her energies. Removal from the group for an appropriate amount of time for "quiet time" is used for a child who has continued unacceptable behavior. Quiet time is for the child to reflect on his or her behavior and refocus.
2. Talk to the parent and ask them to discuss behavior expectations with their child. We also hope parents will share tips with us on ways to help work with their child. Class disruptions including tantrums, excessive crying, throwing objects, screaming, or abusive language create an unhealthy environment for the entire class and take the teacher's attention away from the rest of the children. If these disruptions persist, a parent will be called and asked to pick up the child from class as soon as possible.
3. The parent will be required to attend class in order to help their child succeed.

4. When previous steps have failed, a child may be asked to stay home from class for the day. We reserve the right to hold parent/teacher conferences, as necessary should a pattern of concerning behavior persist. A plan will be developed to remedy the situation and if the plan is not followed or improvement is not seen, further action will be required.
5. At this time, the teachers could consult with THPRD Inclusion staff. Children with persistent behavioral and/or social problems can be assisted with special plans to ensure their success in this classroom setting.
6. If repeated attempts to control a child's behavior fail, the parent(s) will be asked to remove the child permanently from the program.

Please note: Since the safety and well-being of all children is our first priority, hitting, biting and other unsafe physical behavior is taken seriously. We reserve the right to suspend or dismiss a child from the program if staff determines that the program does not meet the needs of the child, if the child is a physical threat to himself or others, or if the child's behavior consistently impedes the normal function of the classroom.

We are unable to provide refunds or credits for any class missed due to behavior problems.

RESTROOM VISITS

All children must have the ability to, and be comfortable with, using the public restroom on their own. A teacher will always accompany them, **but they must be able to be independent when they get inside the public restroom.** Please take your child to the restroom before class each day to reduce the amount of time teachers spend making restroom trips.

ABSENCES

If your child will be absent from Nature Kids, we ask that you call or email the Tualatin Hills Nature Center at **(503) 629-6350** or email **anahill@thprd.org** and convey the message regarding the absence. We are unable to give credit for any days missed.

ILLNESS

Sick children should stay at home where they will have the opportunity to rest, recuperate, and not infect other children. If a child becomes ill during the program, Nature Center staff will contact the parent or other designated person named as an emergency contact to come and pick up the child.

If your child should develop a communicable disease such as flu, chicken pox, head lice, etc., please notify the Preschool Director or Instructor immediately. Please use the following guidelines in determining whether to send your child to class.

Your child should remain at home if he or she:

- Has a temperature above 100° F. The child should not return to class for at least 24 hours after the temperature returns to normal.
- Has vomited and/or has diarrhea during the previous night or morning.
- Has a persistent, productive (coughs up mucus) cough. (This type of cough is debilitating to the child and may spread the illness.)
- Has mucous that is not clear in color and/or an excessively runny nose.
- Has a rash or skin lesion that has not been diagnosed by a doctor.

If your child develops any of these symptoms during class, you may be contacted and asked to pick your child up early. It is more uncomfortable for the child to be sent home than to stay home in the first place.

EMERGENCIES

We do everything possible to minimize accidents through safety programs, close supervision, attentive facility maintenance, and consistent discipline. In the event of an accident that requires more than a hug, reassurance, and a band-aid, our staff will contact the parent or other designated person named as an emergency contact and fill out an incident report.

All of our staff members are certified in first aid and CPR and will provide basic emergency assistance when needed. 911 will be called in the event that a higher level of emergency assistance is necessary. First aid kits and mobile phones are present in the classroom and are taken on walks in the Park.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

We believe open communication between parents and teachers is essential for the program to run smoothly. A weekly newsletter shares the information and highlights of each week of class. If you have any suggestions or concerns, or would like to share something that generated a "wow, cool!" response from you or your child, please email or talk to a teacher or the Preschool Director. Teachers are generally available after the program each day.

We encourage regular communication between parents and teachers in order to create a positive, friendly partnership for the benefit of the children. Please allow the teacher to begin class promptly by having parent/teacher conversations prior to class start time or after class ends for the day. The teachers are also open to having private meetings with parents; please inquire as needed. Parents are always welcome to volunteer in the classroom.

Our teachers work hard to meet the needs of each child. The more knowledge they have about each child better equips them to do so. As parents, you are encouraged to communicate often with the teachers when something out of the ordinary occurs. As you share the information, please respect the privacy of the situation and discuss out of the hearing range of others, including children. Examples of some things that may need to be shared:

- Family member is ill.
- A parent is out of town.
- Child did not sleep well the previous night.
- A pet is missing or has passed away.

CHANGES IN VITAL INFORMATION

If there is a change in address, phone number, emergency contacts, physician, or your child's health status, it is the parent's responsibility to update the emergency contact and medical information section for your child in your on-line account at www.thprd.org.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

The Nature Kids program is greatly enhanced by parent volunteers. You can volunteer by helping with journals; assisting in the classroom; sharing a story, hobby, talent, art project; or by joining us on a walk with the class.

For the safety of the children, THPRD requires all volunteers who work with children to complete the Natural Resources Volunteer Application and Background Check on-line. Every parent who would like to participate or volunteer in the program is required to fill out an on-line form.

Please sign the volunteer calendar, if you are planning to volunteer. Teachers will explain the various volunteer needs. Parents volunteering for Nature Kids record hours on a *Volunteer Log Sheet* in the classroom.

DISCONTINUATION

If for any reason your child will no longer be attending preschool, please notify the Preschool Director in writing. A 30-day notice of discontinuation is requested. A refund for the days remaining in the month that the program is being dropped will be issued. Reminder: the deposit (May tuition) is non-refundable.

CHILD CARE TAX CREDIT

The federal tax number for childcare credits is 93-6011018. You are responsible for maintaining your own records and receipts for tax purposes.

PROGRAM CANCELLATIONS

If for some reason this class is canceled on a regularly scheduled class day (except in situations of inclement weather) every effort will be made to contact you by phone. Otherwise, we meet rain or shine. In the situation of inclement weather, follow closures through the media, watching for *Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District* (THPRD) programs to be canceled or delayed or call our THPRD Inclement Weather Hotline.

THPRD Inclement Weather Hotline: (503) 614-4018

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Parent evaluation of the Nature Kids program is an important factor in planning future improvements. Please help us provide your child with the best possible program by giving us feedback on the distributed evaluation forms.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the staff at the Tualatin Hills Nature Center.

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We are excited about the Nature Kids Preschool and we look forward to providing you and your child with an exceptional experience. We work hard to create a quality program, and we value your patronage and feedback. Please feel free to make suggestions for us to better serve you and your child.

Thank you!

