

The Bridge.

Bridging The Gap Between Today and Tomorrow

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Conner's Night



Grand Rapids Children's Museum
Wednesday, November 17, 2010

By: Melanierose Straub

ESP TRiPs participants joined Melissa Selby-Theut and Melanierose Straub at the Grand Rapids Children museum for Connor's Night. Connor's night is an annual event that serves children affected by autism and their families. Special adaptations are made for the children, and the museum is transformed into a welcoming and enjoyable environment. Fabric is hung from the ceiling to quiet the noise. Staff members turn off as many florescent lights as possible because sometimes they can create additional noise and are too bright for children with sensory sensitivities. During the event volunteers were asked to manage two tasks: watching and playing. While the first hour some volunteers were playing, others were watching several areas to make sure students were. Then for the second hour there was a shift switch so that everyone got the chance to do both.

The experience was very rewarding! During the watch hour, it was amazing to see the interaction and connections made between and among families: siblings were able to play together, parents were able to enjoy seeing their child's enormous smiles as they walked through the doors, and all were able to hear the children's cries of enjoyment as they picked from the numerous activities and exhibits. Families were greeted with understanding and care instead of questions or judgments.

During the play shift, volunteers were asked to participate in parallel play: a form of play where each individual engages in a similar activity yet there is little to no interaction between them. This strategy is used because some autistic children find social interaction intimidating, and this form of play eliminates the threat. Sometimes children are unsure how to play,; when they see someone playing, they will begin to imitate that play. Play is important to foster social and personal development, not just for children with autism but EVERYONE!

At the end of the night what mattered most was that the children and families were able to enjoy themselves while the volunteers got to experience the excitement and act like kids again too! You better believe I will be volunteering again next year. I hope you will be inspired to as well!



Gift for the Holidays

By: Marnie Parris-Bingle

What better way to say you care about your friends, family, or your significant other during the holiday season than to make something for them? I found this great blog that has everything under the sun (okay; we're in Michigan, under the overcast skies) that you can think of to make great gifts. This is fun to do, but can also be an economical way to give gifts and still have money left over for winter tuition and books!

You're Sweet as Pie: <http://bleubirdvintage.typepad.com/blog/2009/10/youre-sweet-as-pie.html>;

Chocolate Chip Pie in a Jar: <http://www.nofussfabulous.com/?p=5543>;

Peppermint Stick Cocoa in a Jar: http://find.myrecipes.com/recipes/recipefinder.dyn?action=displayRecipe&recipe_id=10000001011199

Girlfriend Cookies in a Jar: <http://allrecipes.com/Recipe/Julias-Best-Ever-Chocolate-Chip-Cookies-In-A-Jar/Detail.aspx>

Toffee Blondie Cookies in a Jar: <http://bakedbree.com/toffee-blondies-week-4-of-12-weeks-of-cookies>

Cowgirl Cookies recipe can be found here: <http://www.bakerella.com/mix-things-up/>

Another site I found that had wonderful ideas for gifts was here at the Brown Eyed Baker: <http://www.browneyedbaker.com/2009/12/02/homemade-food-gift-ideas/>

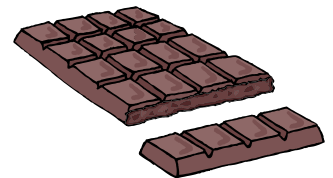
She has ideas for gift baskets, soup mix in a jar, cocoa in a jar, or even sweet treats packaged really cute. A gift always seems extra special when it is packaged creatively, so let your imagination run wild and have fun with it!



Chicago Chocolate Tour

By: Ashleigh Zerbst

Lets start by saying that chocolate is great in general, but chocolate is even better in Chicago! Earlier this month we went on our second cultural trip to Chicago to snack on chocolate, shop, and eat a great dinner. All who went to Chicago said the trip was great and the chocolate was even better. We got to Chicago and started off in the historical Marshall Field's, where the chocolate tasting began. The destinations we went to included Frango, where we sampled a chocolate flavored mint. We also went to Argo, where we tried a delicious chocolate flavored tea and a brownie, and Sarah's Pastries, which I believe had the best chocolate and peanut butter combination ever-I would even dare to say it was better than a Reese's peanut butter cup! At Wow Bao we sampled a chocolate, coconut and ginger bao, which was ooey and gooey goodness. The last of the stops was at Charbonnel in Macy's, where we sampled the best mint flavored bon bon. After the tour was completed all students were really excited because we had two hours to go and explore Chicago. Many people went shopping and others just strolled the sidewalks and took in the breathtaking skyline. After the glorious two hour break, we drove to the best Ethiopian restaurant. The food was excellent and we got to eat with our fingers, which was a new experience for most! After the entire day, we came back to Allendale with a sugar high and very full bellies.



You've Got Questions? We've Got Answers!

By: Melissa Selby-Theut

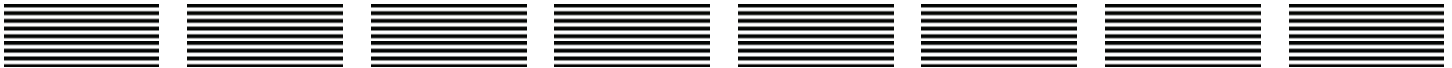
If you have any other questions about the program that you would like answered, you can either submit them to frontesp@gvsu.edu or schedule an appointment with your ESP advisor. Remember, we're here to help! I will be answering those questions in the newsletter throughout the course of the year.

Is there any way a person who's not in ESP can receive similar services? My friend is on the waiting list but it's so long.

Unfortunately, no. GVSU used to have a program called EXCEL, which provided similar services to first-generation and Pell-eligible students. That program was cut when the Advising Resource Center turned into the Student Academic Success Center. Unfortunately, EXCEL was the only other program offering hour appointments and holistic advising. While we used to be able to refer ESP applicants who didn't make it into the program over to EXCEL, we are no longer able to do that.

In the meantime, I'd suggest that anyone unable to get into ESP utilize the on-campus resources that are available. Every major is associated with an advising center, where students can go to ask a question or have an academic plan created. GVSU also has a Career and Counseling Center and Career Services Office to provide personal and career support. While none of these provide the benefits and individualized services provided by ESP, they are very useful to students in need of assistance.

As a side note, tell your friends that if they apply they should be sure to indicate that they were referred by a current ESP member on their applications. We award extra points for admission to students referred by participants!



Mexican Fruit Cake

By: Ashleigh Zerbst

Want to try a different kind of cake this season? Try one that has fruit and nuts in it! It is not like your traditional fruit cake; the Mexican fruit cake is so much better.

Cake mix:

2 cups flour

2 eggs

2 cups sugar

2 tsp. baking soda

1 can (20 oz.) crushed pineapple, juice and all

1 cup nuts (walnuts are the best but any nut would be good.)



Mix together and bake in 9x13 pan for 35 minutes at 350 degrees.

Ice topping:

1 cup Powdered sugar

8 oz. Softened cream cheese

1 tsp. Vanilla extract

Fork holes in cake and spread icing on warm cake, sprinkle extra nuts on top if wanted. Let sit for about 15-20 minutes then enjoy!!!

That Special Time of Year

By: India Stanford

The time is drawing near for the special time of year
When lights are dusted off and Christmas trees reappear
The lines start to form for those early morning sales
And kids are soothed to sleep with short holiday tales
Autumn leaves become speckled with fallen bits of snow
While tummies begin to ache from eating bits of cookie dough
This is a time when families congregate together
To share memories, exchange gifts, and fill the room with laughter
No matter your tradition, take time to enjoy the day
Before the New Year rolls around, and these moments pass away

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