

Dear Friends,

Spring evokes a sense of revival and rejuvenation in our natural surroundings. The lush greenery, blooming flowers, and new life all around us fill us with happiness, compassion, and a strong urge to nurture the new growth of Spring. These values of care and nurturing are also integral to our approach to caring for young children. Just as we tend to the growth of Spring, we must also attend to the holistic growth of our children - mentally, physically, and emotionally. **At UMCS Growing Tree Children's Center, we prioritize joy, love, and holistic care for each child, reflected in the warm and welcoming environment fostered by our experienced teaching staff.**

Inspired by Spring's new growth and revival, the Growing Tree Children's Center will renew our foundational values over the next year while enhancing the curriculum and play spaces to create a well-rounded early childhood education experience. Our play-based, child-centered approach and safe, loving environment will remain while new evidence-based educational practices are implemented. **The Growing Tree Children's Center has a vision for the future - giving our children more opportunities to explore the natural world around them, enabling them to develop at their own pace and gain empathy and curiosity for the world around them.**

Our Curriculum Coordinator has developed an exciting Summer Program for School Age children in 2023. **The program will utilize Milwaukee County's stunning Washington Park as a classroom, covering subjects like Botany, Hydrology, Ecology, and Agriculture.** The Summer Program will offer hands-on learning experiences through experiments and field trips. While our primary aim is to provide academic enrichment during the break, we also believe that summer is a time for kids to have fun! So, we'll eat popsicles, blow lots of bubbles, and run through sprinklers with our friends.

The Growing Tree is fortunate to have a county park across the street. However, our center requires a private outdoor space that caters to all age groups. We aim to include multiple age-appropriate playscapes, natural landscaping to support our nature-based curriculum, and materials that are inclusive of all abilities. We plan to break ground on a new playscape next Spring by integrating a pollinator garden, rainwater runoff system and incorporating more natural materials. This space will provide a safe environment for our little ones to explore while challenging our older children to use their bodies in new ways.

For more than 25 years, the Growing Tree Children's Center has been a delightful and welcoming place for children. Our team of educators is excited to introduce new programs that will continue to build on this legacy while providing even more opportunities for learning and growth. ***We owe our success to the unwavering support of our community, and we invite you to join us in our mission to provide top-notch services to families in the Washington Park neighborhood. By contributing to UMCS, you can help us create an early childhood education program that meets the unique needs of our young learners and ensure that the Growing Tree Children's Center remains a source of joy and education for generations to come.***

With gratitude,



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Director/Administrator



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