

DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE CHILDREN'S CENTERS DBCC NEWS

DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE CHILD CARE, Inc.
Park Avenue Center, 806 Park Ave., Baltimore, MD 21201-4807 • 410-669-1010
University Center, 237 Arch Street, Baltimore, MD 21201-1526 • 410-659-0515

May, 2007

BLOCK PLAY

by Susan Sandstrom

Scan the brochures from most child care centers and you will see the same phrase- our children learn through play. That is what the researchers have determined--*children learn through play*. As I travel around and visit other child care centers I always look for one of the benchmarks of play-blocks in a classroom. Most centers have some unit blocks but few places have the large hollow blocks. Blocks are expensive, especially the large hollow blocks, and many centers can't afford them. Blocks are also a nuisance to clean up and take up a lot of space in a classroom so some teachers prefer not to use them. But blocks and lots of them, are one of the essentials for good play. Check out the following learning opportunities provided by blocks.

The whole thing started over breakfast one morning when the conversation turned to "big" school. I told the children a little bit about big school and they wanted more and more information. I told them that in a lot of schools children sat at desks and the teacher told them what to do. Then I explained about tests and one thing led to another. The children immediately got up from the breakfast table and created desks out of the hollow blocks.

"Is this how they look?" the children asked. Eventually there were about six or eight block desks in two rows, each with a block as a chair. Next, blocks were stacked up and I was directed

to stand behind the "podium" and conduct a spelling test exactly like the ones in big school while the children sat at their "desks."

I was initially unwilling to play because these were pre-literate children with only a few sight words in their repertoire. I told the children I didn't think spelling tests were a good idea but the children were relentless and I finally agreed. I thought it might be interesting to see what happened.

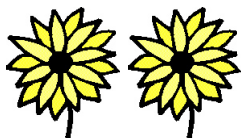
First I handed out paper and pencils; then I very slowly recited the first spelling word to them.

"Stop, write the word 'stop' on your paper." (This is often one of the first "sight" words children learn.)

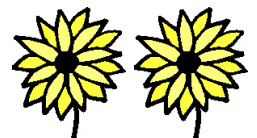
Some of the children immediately wrote down
(Cont'd on page 2)



Nicholas
Rambharose,
age 5



**Another successful Spring Fling !
We raised over \$13,000! See pages 6-7**



BLOCK PLAY *(Cont'd from page 1)*

the word. Others scrunched up their faces and put a mark or two on the page before them. A child asked for help and a little girl got up from her desk and helped him with that tricky "s."

"Your next word is 'no'." There was no problem writing this word.

"Your next word is 'mommy'. Write the word 'mommy'."

Someone else needed help. There was a lot of discussion about how to spell this difficult word but eventually they were ready for the next word.

This continued until the class had about 10 words on their paper.

"Now, everyone put your pencils down and hand in your paper."

The children excitedly handed in their papers and crowded around to see what I would do next. I carefully looked at each paper and in red ink I printed GOOD JOB! on every paper. One child copied "good job" on a blank sheet of paper. The children happily took their tests back to their seats and said, "Let's do it again!"

We had many spelling tests that day and I tried to mix things up a little and affect a different personality for each test--one time I was a very strict teacher who didn't allow any collaboration and who insisted the children raise their hands to speak. The children were remarkably cooperative and it was very important to the children that this play be authentic. They kept stopping me to make sure I was doing it right--"Are you sure this is how it is in "big" school?" I think they were suspicious because of my initial reluctance to participate.

[Our director happened to be showing a small group of VIPs around that first morning, explaining our play-based curriculum. I think she was a little embarrassed when they came into our classroom and we were in the middle of a very structured spelling test!]

The interest in big school continued so we decided to visit the elementary school across the street. Unfortunately we didn't get to see a spelling test but the children did see children sitting at desks and raising their hands to speak. Spelling tests continued for a couple of days after our visit and the children, after seeing a "real" big school teacher in action, finally took over as the spelling teacher. I don't think they ever appreciated my portrayal of the "big" school teacher!



One year in my classroom, there were several four-year-old children who were very athletic and

very interested in sports. They brought in sports equipment and played baseball or football or soccer on the playground every day. They also loved talking about sports. One day a child taped a unit block on the bottom of each shoe and started walking around the classroom as if on high heels. These quickly became ice skates and soon everyone was wearing block ice skates. They didn't stay on too well so the teachers had to supplement the children's taping job with a whole lot more tape. It wasn't long before an area in the classroom with a wooden floor became the ice rink and a unique form of hockey was born. It was the most amazing play!

The "rink" had a masking tape border on the floor and the children actually played hockey. They made clumsy hockey sticks out of taped together unit blocks and a half unit block became the puck. A couple of children eventually brought in real hockey sticks and a real puck from home but I was pleased when the children discarded the real puck because the half-unit block puck worked better. As the days and weeks went by, the play became more and more complicated. The children learned to skate so well with the blocks on their shoes they looked like they were really on ice. They glided and turned sharply in imitation of real ice skaters. They made a goal out of blocks and started keeping score. It was interesting to see how just about everyone became involved in the play. Some were good at taping on the "skates," some kept score; others modified the goal. There seemed to be something for everyone to do. Every day we had a game or two of hockey and we went through cases of masking tape.

Keeping the hockey sticks down on the floor was the one rule I insisted on and the children complied. The children created other rules and they changed all the time. The game started out competitive but the play soon changed because there were fewer problems and the game lasted longer when there were no winners or losers. Every goal was celebrated by all the players.

No scripted lesson plan could match the learning in this activity! There were all the motor skills that were refined, from learning to skate, to taping, to writing down scores. The children's social skills improved with all the negotiation and cooperation. All the score keeping extended the math skills and it was so much fun the children were motivated to practice, practice, practice.

[There was a problem or two with this activity. The director's office was directly under my classroom and at some point she came upstairs to see what in the heck was going on. Wooden "skates" on a wooden floor created a lot of noise below us. She complained about the noise throughout the hockey craze but she

remained a good sport about it. The other problem was the floor itself. Every bit of varnish was rubbed off the wooden floor. We had to get the floor re-finished at the end of the school year.]



Wanda stood on the hollow block and carefully removed the lid to the large aquarium that housed two classroom pets. She slowly picked up Joe the white rat with two hands and handed him carefully to her friend, Alex, standing nearby. Next she picked up Cindy Lou, the other white rat, and the two children carried the rats over to the block area. Wanda and Alex had spent a lot of time building a rat maze out of unit blocks and the time had come to try it out.

They placed the rats at the entrance to the maze and both rats obediently proceeded through the course. The maze was a straight pathway with side compartments along the way. The rats explored the entire course and when they got to the end the children picked them up and brought them back to the beginning to start again. The rats soon tired of this game and began climbing over the sides of the maze. The children added blocks to the sides to contain the rats and the rats cooperated a little while longer.

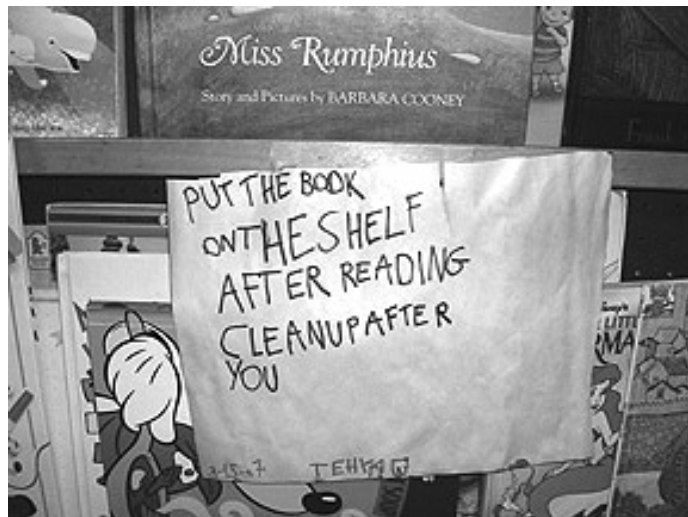
At some point the children finally realized that they needed to change the game for the rats to remain engaged. One of the larger compartments in the maze became a house and blocks were used to make beds. The rats wouldn't stay in bed so the play changed. The children built a climber for the rats to climb. The rats, as usual, were very good sports about the whole thing!

This unusual activity is another very valuable experience for young children. Learning to work kindly and gently with a pet has an impact on interpersonal relationships. Being aware of another's feelings (pet or person) is something all adults promote in children. Trying to create a maze-like structure is also difficult for a four-year-old. One needs the spatial skills to make a pathway large enough for a rat to run through. This takes a lot of trial and error. Also, the many modifications of the maze are evidence of all the critical thinking skills at work.



Blocks are props for other activities, building materials and furniture. They were designed purposefully so children learn math concepts such as fractions, patterns and geometry through play. They help children learn scientific principals like balance and construction. They develop an aesthetic sense through design and symmetry. They encourage academic skills when children create signage for their

structures. They are open-ended, creative and they feel good in your hands. They encourage social play, language and cooperation. Building with blocks requires a lot of problem solving, planning, trial and error, persistence and determination. They can be used by a child working alone or with a small group. The possibilities are endless. It is hard to imagine a playful curriculum that does not include lots of blocks!



Sign by Tehya West, age 5



"DBCC with rats in the basement" by Eva Mammen, age 4

WHY CHILD CARE?

By Tyra Lowery. Teacher at University Center

It was my second year at Southwestern High School and I was very happy to enter the early child care program there. My freshman year was so bad that this new year could only be better. I was excited about the program. As soon as I took my first steps into Southwestern's family center I knew I wanted to be a child care provider. The teachers and the children and the students--it was just like an oversized family! You could feel the love in the air!

I started spending all of my time in the family center. Helping out in the center was my favorite thing to do. I enjoyed cleaning up behind the children or helping them brush their teeth before nap or reading them a few books before nap. I watched the children grow and develop before my eyes and move from the infant side of the classroom to the toddler side. It was so amazing to watch the change!

My senior year started my internship in the program. I worked five hours a day, Monday through Friday with the toddlers. I thought this would be an easy job. Then I came face to face with a two year old, going on twenty one. I will never forget his name--Darrell. Every day of my internship this little boy made me question my skill and abilities. He was so mean to me and I would try my best to develop some kind of bond with him. I sang his favorite songs, read to him, did art projects with him, took walks with him during outside time and during nap time when he refused to sleep, I rocked him in the rocking chair. When that wouldn't work I put him in a stroller and rolled him around the hallway until he fell asleep.

The other teachers would tell me that Darrell really liked me and when I wasn't there he had a really hard time. I found that very hard to believe. To me every day was hard for him and even harder for me. Something inside of me wouldn't give up on this child. His very own mother asked me how I could deal with her son every day. She even tried to convince me that her son had bonded with me. I couldn't see it. In my eyes I didn't think the child even cared if I was there or not.

The year was coming to an end and it was the last week of my internship. Darrell's behavior had improved. He would give me a hug and a kiss at the end of each day and say, "See you later." When my last day came and I had to say goodbye to Darrell. He told me, "No, no. See you later." I tried to explain to him that this was my last day and I wouldn't be seeing him every day. He broke down and cried. It broke my heart to leave but I made sure to go back to visit him now and then.

This experience follows me each and every day as a child care provider. I remember my first bond with a child, a bond that only his little eyes could see. He knew that I wouldn't give up on him and I still feel the same way about any child that comes my way.

ALUMNI NEWS

Dear Margo, Susan and friends at DBCC,

I still really enjoy the Newsletter--Thank you for keeping us all informed!

Max is a senior at Park School. He's a "Habitat" leader and loves school. He played varsity soccer and will be goalie for the varsity lacrosse team this spring. He just learned that he got accepted at Wake Forest University in North Carolina.

He's fun!
XXOO

Best wishes for the New Year!
Susie Chisolm



*Bailey with mentor
Dr. Josh Gordon, at
Barenburg Eye
Associates in
Ellicott City.*

Bailey Kramer, 18, attended DBCC's Park Avenue pre-school through Kindergarten program, where she fondly recalls the "goodbye window," Evelyn painting her nails and reading her books, the iguana and the rabbit, the art shows, the playground, the visits to Baltimore sites, and her grandmother, former director Nancy Kramer, never being far away. Bailey attends Centennial High School in Ellicott City with fellow DBCC alumna Meredith Larson, and attended middle school with alumna Ana Schwartz. Bailey enjoys sports, especially softball, which she's played since age 8. She is co-captain of her high school team this year. One of her favorite classes during her senior year has been Mentoring, during which she spent part of her school day learning alongside an optometrist at his practice. She even auto-refracted patients prior to the doctor's examination. Her plan is to take pre-optometry and major in Biology at Salisbury University, followed by Optometry School in Philadelphia or Memphis. She is eagerly looking forward to a 2-week canoe trip this summer through Algonquin State Park in Canada with other incoming Freshmen.

Bailey credits DBCC with teaching her to keep expanding her horizons, and showing her that she is in charge of her destiny. The child-guided nature of DBCC's program combined with the teachers' child-development expertise turn children into leaders possessing a can-do attitude with an interest in finding out what life has to offer.

Dear Aliceanna,

My son is two years old and is a terror in the grocery store. He doesn't like sitting in the grocery cart so he runs all up and down the aisle and gives me a fit. Things deteriorate until I lose my temper or he has a tantrum. This happens all the time and I am getting tired of it. Any suggestions?

Signed, Willing to go on a hunger strike!

Dear Willing,

This is called "setting up" your child. Now, I realize that you are not doing this intentionally, but let's think about this a little more.

Okay-You know that your child will run in the store-it's an established pattern at this point-so why set him up for a tantrum and set you up for high blood pressure? Instead, insist he sit in the cart-there are no choices and you are firm. This is the pattern you want to establish-one that will work for both of you. Have something for him to munch on or look through or hold but he must stay in the cart. Warn him ahead of time that he will be sitting in the cart-don't say it in anger, just state the fact. Ignore his protests or say, "I know you don't like that" and change the subject. He may have a tantrum the first time but you must convince him that you mean business and will not change your mind-and, no matter what, don't change your mind. Do not be wishy-washy. No pleading. You will be amazed at how quickly your child accepts this new pattern if you are FIRM (not mean, just not open to other options or negotiations).

Do you understand what setting up your child means? Setting a child up is when you know about a child's negative behavior in certain situations, can predict a child's negative behavior yet you do nothing to prevent it. Complaining, reprimanding or punishing after the fact is too late and ineffective. Prevent a negative behavior long enough and it will be eliminated.

Young children can easily get into a behavior pattern that you don't like. It is important to establish a positive behavior pattern and maintain this pattern. A child can easily become a problem if the negative behavior is constantly, albeit inadvertently, reinforced. It's as if young children hear something often enough they start to believe it and start to live it. "I am a hitter."

Other ways to avoid setting up your child?

- If your child runs away from you, use prevention and hold her hand. Prevention is the key in many situations.
- If your child pushes children down, don't allow her to approach children without holding her hand. Instead of "don't push him down" say "what a good friend you are."
- Announcing some negative behavior in front of the child to others (family members, teachers, etc.). "He is always hitting me." That is not what you want the child to hear about himself. You want your child to hear positive things about himself. This applies to infants and toddlers.

If you have a question you'd like to ask Aliceanna please email her at uc@dbcckids.org and put Ask Aliceanna in the subject line.

IT'S A BOY! 😊 IT'S A GIRL!

😊 Nora is a big sister! **Gabriel Solomon Shive** was born on March 4, 2007 and weighed 7 lbs. 8 oz.

Congratulations to Gigi, Doug and Nora!

😊 Alumna Mahey is a big sister! **Laila Gheis** was born on February 20, 2007 and weighed 9 lbs. 2 oz.

Congratulations to Fatma, Mohamed and Mahey!

😊 **James Lucas Carrion-Mong** has arrived! Lucas was born on March 19, 2007 and weighed 7 lbs. 5.6 oz.

Congratulations to Jessica and Audrey!

😊 Faith is a big sister! **Hope Yvette Mosby** was born on April 8, 2007 and weighed 7 lbs. 15 oz.

Congratulations to Silvia, Barry, Deray and Faith!

😊 Catherine is a big sister! **Alexander Thomas Zic** was born on April 19, 2007 and weighed 6 lbs. 8 oz.

Congratulations to Sarah, John and Catherine!

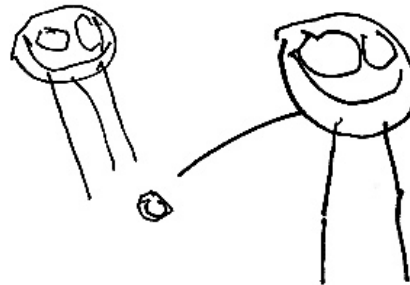
😊 Gregory Wilkins and Kashawnta Stanley are grandparents! **Jeremiah Vincent Wilkins** was born on April 30, 2007 and weighed 6 lbs. 9 oz.

Congratulations to Gregory, Kashawnta, Jhennifer.

Butterfly by Lyndsey Brown, age 4



"Mommy and poppy and me" by Harry Zimmerman, age 3



People, drawn by

Zola Litt-Reddy, age 4



SANTA
KNOW
TOO
CRS MS!

"Santa can you get me a tattoo for Christmas?"
by Essence Aaron, age 5



Spring Fling 2007

BROUGHT IN OVER \$13,000!



★ The event committee chaired by **Mark Benson** worked tirelessly and DBCC so appreciated all the hard work. Thank you Mark!



(Left)
★ **Claudia Wilson Randall**,
DBCC board president
and
Margo Sipes,
DBCC Executive Director

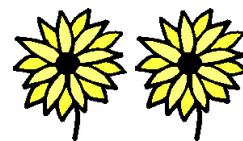
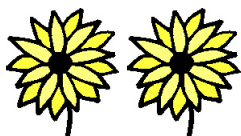


★ **Maggie de Cuevas** took responsibility for the Silent Auction which was a huge undertaking on its own! Thank you Maggie!

Event sponsors:

Struever Bros. Eccles & Rouse / Constellation Energy

**M & T Bank / The Kornblatt Company,
Miles & Stockbridge Foundation, Inc.**



★ We all enjoyed the music of
The Rhodes Tavern Troubadours.

★ Special thanks to staff members,
**Jane Kamau, Angie McCadden,
Kim Francis**

★ Each classroom created a theme basket, put together by the parents and auctioned off at the event. Each classroom also created at least one original art piece created by the children.

★ Special thanks for **David Wells** from **The Wine Source** located on 3601 Elm Avenue in Hampden. David has donated wine and other beverages for our annual events for many years. We also want to thank **Maryland General Hospital** for allowing everyone to park in their lot for free!

★ Parents and staff made desserts which were delicious!

Desserts were brought by:

• Diane Shaw / Andy Kane	Tamika Cobb
• Angela and Andrew Palmer	Elaine Swift
• Juliet Rambharose	Erin Strovel
• Kate and Theresa Swift-Scanlan	Olgun Guvench
• Robin Hernandez	Kathy Wilson
• Tammy Ray	Luciene Parsley
• Kirsten Blom	Chris and Lizzy Menard
• Rebecca Bainum	Lizzy Karime
• Tamika Cobb	
• Elaine Swift	

★ Volunteers on the night of the event included:

Elaine Swift
 Dan and Sharon Hopkins
 Andy Mammen
 Ameejill Whitlock
 Jane Kamau
 Margaret Finley and Chris Meier
 Tiffany Thornton
 Alex Nones
 Leisha Webb
 Lorien Walley
 Angela White
 Colette Veasey-Cullors
 Eraina Ridley
 Luciene and Andy Parsley
 Edith Garrett
 Deborah Kleinmann - Spice
 Evelyn Owens
 Kate Swift-Scanlan
 Gwen Chesley
 Diane Shaw
 Ronnie Williams
 Roni Neff
 Kim Francis
 Margo Sipes
 Susan Sandstrom



A FEW OF THE PARTYGOERS!

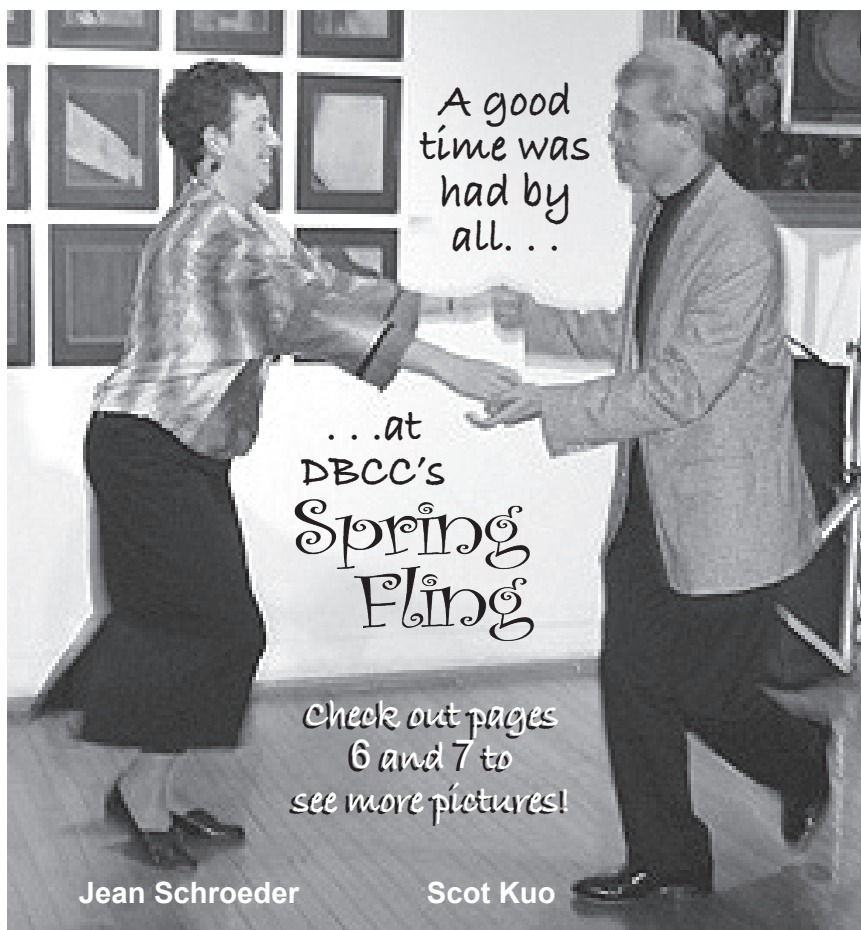
(Above) Eraina Ridley, Tiffany Thornton & Tia Hargis
 (Left) Angie White, Leisha Webb & Calvin Pittman, Jr.
 (Below) Alex Nones, Aaron and Cecilia Meisner



CHILDSPEAK

- **Lindsey Brown**, age 4, asked her teacher, "Do you know what a web site is? It means where you look at scary things."
- **Patrick Okolo**, age 4, came to the teacher with a very sad face. "What's the matter?"
 "Fallin doesn't love me anymore. What can I do?"
- **Noah Korman**, age 3, was in the car and noticed a red sports car with the top down in the traffic next to him. He called out the window loudly, "DUDE YOU NEED A ROOF!"
- **Jordan Van Doren**, age 4, "Do you know that I have the most beautiful eyes in the whole world because my mother made them?"
- **Eva Mammen**, age 4, was hanging out in the office. She noticed the staff sign-in computer, pushed a button and a new screen came up.
 "Look," she said, "I did something."
 The teacher told her, "Oh, please don't touch! That's a very important computer because it tells us how much to pay the teachers."
 Eva said, "Then why do you have it down low so children can reach it?"

- **Isaac Chang**, age 4: Do you know why I'm so smart? Because I ate Smarty candies.
- **Kellen Guvench**, age 4, was asked if he wanted to live in Portland. He said, "Yes," (his grandparents live in Portland, Maine).
 His mom said, "No, I mean Oregon."
 Kellen looked confused and said, "No, no, we can't live there. Pointing to his belly, he said, "My "oregons" are in my body right here."
- **Nicholas Rambharose** age 5, cut his finger. The teacher put a bandaid on it and gave him the "boo boo bear" (an ice pack in the shape of a bear's head). Nicholas took one look at the ice pack and said, "Where did his body go?"
- **Kayla Patel**, age 2, was eating her lunch. She bit into a cracker and said brightly, "I'm enjoying this."
- The teacher was teasing **Lindsey Brown**, age 4, and said, "Don't drive your parents crazy."
 Lindsey replied, "But I don't have a driving lesson. I have only a driving lesson for small cars (i.e. toy)."
- **Patrick Okolo**, age 4, came to the teacher and said, "I give up!" The teacher said, "Why?"
 He answered, "Because my brain can't think."
- **Isaac Chang**, age 4: You know why my parents' skin is so old-I mean wrinkled? Because they drink coffee."



LISH

By Room 5 at Park Avenue

Why is Lish so slippery?
 Lish was always little.
 He was the littlest fish
 In the whole wide class.
 I love Lish.
 He was my Valentine.
 I love him so much
 Until he died.
 Lish was very cute.
 A baby fish.
 I love Lish.
 I just love Lish.
 I wonder if all the fish
 Gonna die with Lish.
 I miss Lish.
 I'm gonna ask Daddy to
 Buy me a fish and
 I'll name him
 Lish again.



Downtown Baltimore Child Care, Inc.
 806 Park Avenue
 Baltimore, MD 21201-4807

Address service requested

NONPROFIT ORG.
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 BALTO. MD.
 PERMIT NO. 5402



*Childhood should be
 a journey, not a race.*